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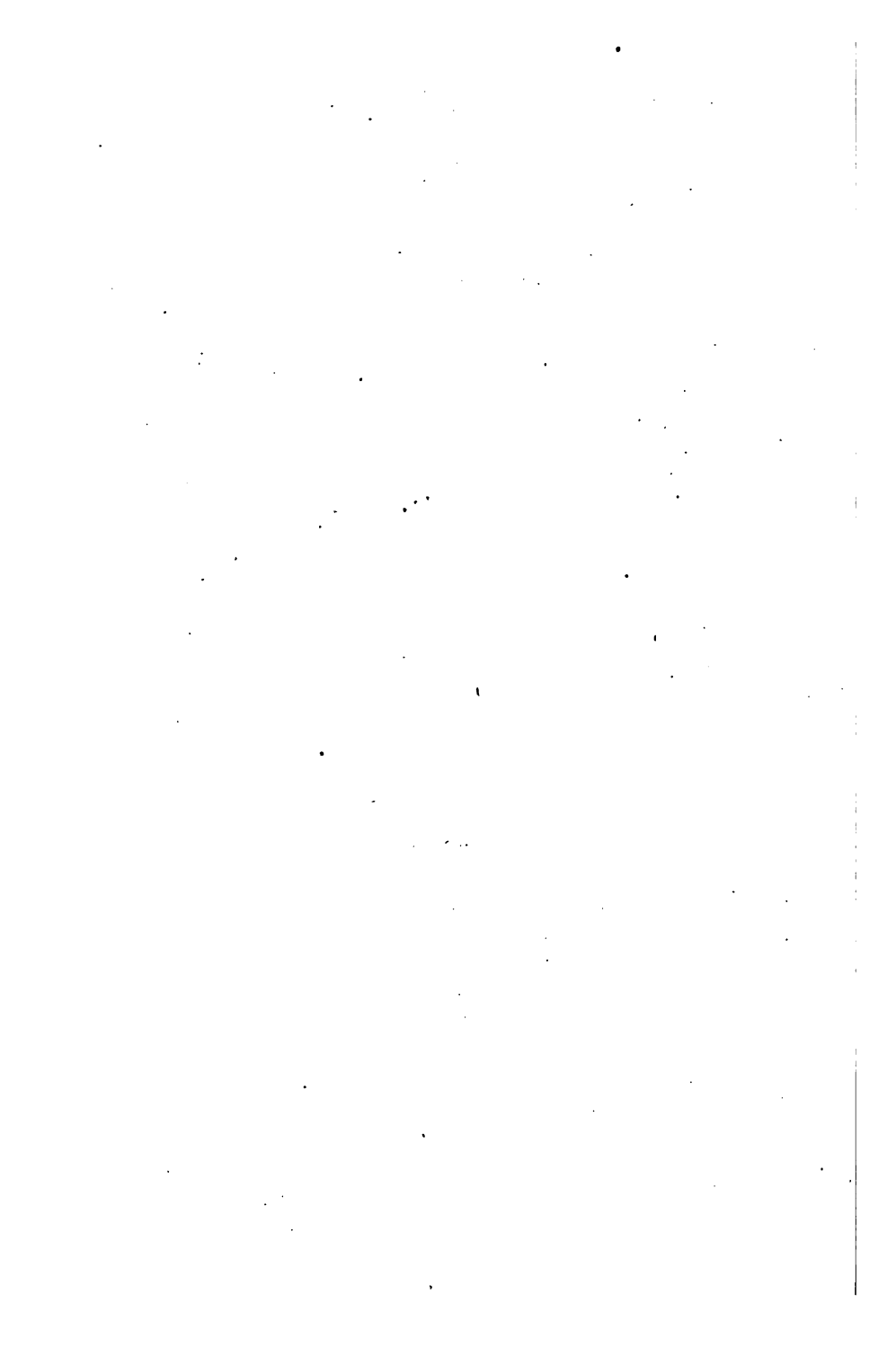
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# JACK SCUDAMORE'S DAUGHTER

*A Domestic Story*

BY

FOLKESTONE WILLIAMS

IN THREE VOLUMES

VOL. II.



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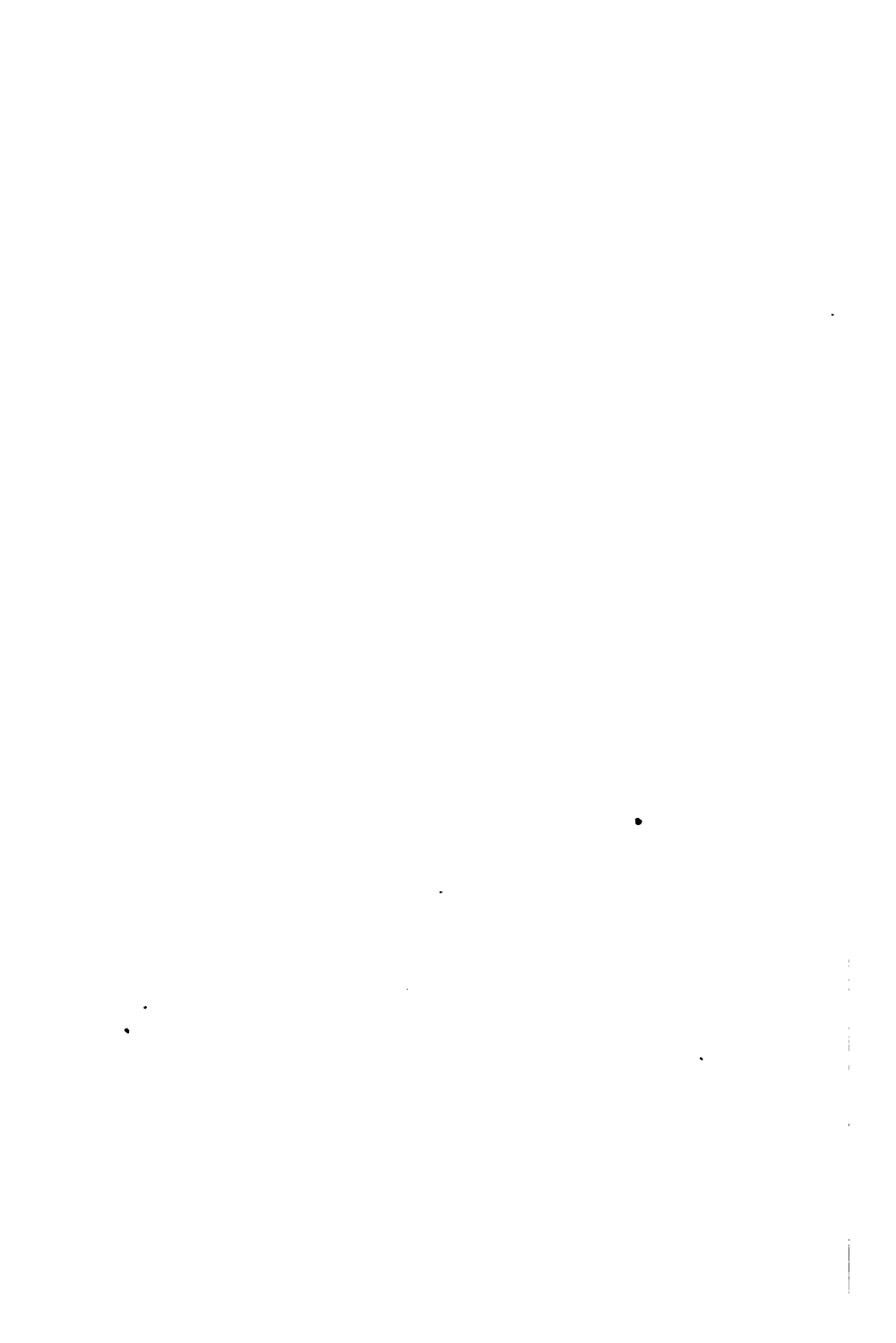
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# JACK SCUDAMORE'S DAUGHTER.



## CHAPTER I.

### JINKS'S IMPERIAL CIRCUS.

EVERY town and hamlet in the vale of Delamere had turned out its able-bodied population—as in almost all popular gatherings, the infirm and the juvenile contributing a considerable per-centage. For the grisly-headed labourer, no matter how bad was his special enemy, “the rheumatis,” seized his ragged wide-awake and knotted stick, and trudged from his cozy chimney-corner—when the flaxen-cropped urchin, his grandson, rushed in from birding in the bean-field, crying out, “The circus folk be a-gooing to pervarm on Banbury Down!”—his leather-gaiters, hob-nailed ankle-boots, and brown

smock-frock were the next minute seen vaulting over the stile in the lane that led to the path over the fields, in which an irregular procession of lads in their holiday suits, with lasses in their Sunday finery, was joyously proceeding.

Matrons, with infant charges in their arms, hurried after their lords and masters. Even crippled old dames hobbled slowly on the same road, as anxious as their juniors to witness the promised spectacle.

Along the roads and lanes rattled tradesmen's carts and farmers' gigs—then came caravans and wagons, crammed with shouting school-children, waving their coloured pocket-handkerchiefs with frantic delight. Past them dashed the vehicles of the gentry; sporting gentlemen in dog-carts, with grinning "tigers" *dos-à-dos*; military officers driving curriole or phaeton, with horses of the most showy description, and grooms apparently to match; corpulent chairmen of quarter sessions, in open carriages, with blooming wives and daughters; quiet-looking clergymen, in equally quiet-

looking buggies, drawn by the very safest and apparently the very slowest of horses; and park-phaetons with dashing thorough-breds, charioteered by hopeful heirs in the most fashionable driving costume, smoking cigars of the choicest brand, and airing young ladies whose jewellery and millinery were pretty sure to be held in much higher estimation than their reputations.

Mixed with these were scores of equestrians—"young Rapids"—chiefly in white cords, and blue or green cut-aways, who trotted or galloped beside and before all vehicles containing tolerably handsome women, with an intense conviction that they were not likely to pass unobserved. With them were mingled many of their seniors, their ordinary business-aspect disappearing under a sense of unwonted enjoyment: the miller and the maltster, the factor and the brewer, the village doctor and the town attorney, the duke's steward and my lord's bailiff, had mounted their easy-going cobs, and exchanging noisy gratulations, were proceeding to the scene of attraction.

Gipsies on donkeys, hucksters in their carts, were hurrying to the same destination, shouting to timid ladies driving skittish ponies in pretty wagnettes, and venturing free-and-easy salutations to comfortable old couples sitting demurely in dingy rattle-traps, drawn by a fat cart-horse at a funeral pace.

Great was the commotion on the road, when a well-appointed team, bearing the family of one of the county magnates, dashed by—especially when a barouche and four, preceded by out-riders in the Porchester livery, proclaimed the presence of the popular Lord-Lieutenant. There was almost as much hurra-ing when honest Jack Scudamore was recognised, riding by the side of his beautiful daughter, and the best judges could not decide which had the best nag.

Uproarious was the shouting produced by young Lord Delamere's four panting grays, drawing his well-appointed drag; but wonderful was the excitement created by the appearance of a tandem, drawn by thorough-bred bays, driven by a lady, and still

more marvellous, attended by a female groom. Yes; notwithstanding that she wore a white box-coat with many capes, buttoned up to her throat, and a man's hat, no one could doubt the sex of the owner of the small gloved hands that held the parasol whip and the "ribbons." With the white handle of her whip she exchanged the compliments of the road with her male acquaintances, nodding her head familiarly, without endangering the position of the flower hanging at her mouth. The face was as well known as the plump features of the girl who sat in the orthodox flunkey attitude, with folded arms, on the lower seat.

Shouts of laughter and jocose observations followed their course; for the former was recognised as Miss Lucretia Brabazon, and the latter as her maid, Patty Clark.

"That beeats cock-foighting!" cried one freckled-faced chawbacon to another, opening his enormous jaws with a loud rustic laugh. "Whoever seed the loike o' thatten? Eh, meâte?"

"Haw! haw!" echoed the other, raising his



little carter's hat as he scratched his carroty locks. "What be she gooing to doo next, I wonder? Volk zay madame ha' took to oss-racin, and has nought but meedens in the stable, cause she can't abide no men,—and that thissen be her head grum. Well, it *be* a queer start, that's zartain!"

Giles was quite correct. The owner of Brabazon Lodge had recently purchased a small portion of Jack Scudamore's racing-stock, and, much to the scandal of her clerical friend, had announced her intention of running one or two at the approaching county races. It became known at the same time that as she "hated men," she would employ only females in her establishment; in pursuance of which resolution she invariably rode out with a female attendant in a blue riding-habit, with red collar and cuffs (the Brabazon livery) and a man's hat, edged with and surrounded by a band of gold lace.

In this way she made her appearance as a patroness of the turf, and was ready with her

betting-book in hand at all meetings, to give or take odds with any one, to the immense delight of the knowing ones, particularly of the gentlemen of the Delamere Hunt, with whom she was a special favourite.

The talk about her had become more startling than ever. No strong-minded woman had attained a tithe of the fame she enjoyed. Her stables and her trainers were objects of extraordinary comment,—neither man nor boy being employed, only girls; and though it was said that they used side-saddles and habits in public, the wildest rumours were afloat as to their “horseyneſs” in manners and apparel when indoors.

Patty had come from the rectory on the emigration of Miss Brabazon’s travelling establishment, and had at once been taken into favour. Being the daughter of a deceased stud-groom at Delamere Court, at an early age she had learnt a good many ſtable accompliſhments; ſo that her miſtreſs, in carrying out her new vagary, found

her services so valuable, that she seldom went to public places without her.

The consequence of this was, Patty Clark was almost as much talked about as her eccentric employer. Among male domestics—especially those engaged in the care of horses—she was looked upon as a living wonder. As the tandem passed, they stared at her impassive face and unconcerned manner with open mouth and eyes, as if they could scarcely make up their minds to the reality of the phenomenon.

The cavalcade proceeded more slowly up the ascent that led on to the Down, where a prodigious array of flags, tents, and caravans indicated the position of the performers; and a fast-increasing circle of spectators and vehicles, that of the audience. Here, too, were the usual addition to a rustic gathering,—booths and stalls for the sale of “the delicacies of the season,”—of which gingerbread-nuts and ginger-beer were in the usual liberal supply.

The centre of attraction, however, was the

area enclosed by the crowd, wherein a procession of figures on horseback was seen slowly moving round, two and two, preceded by a brass-band, playing with tremendous energy. The riders displayed various very showy costumes, though it was not easy to state their age or nationality; the steeds were of all hues, in which cream-colour and piebald predominated. The musicians wore an indescribable cross between the dress of a fireman and a beef-eater.

Helmets occasionally mingled with Spanish hats and plumes; but there was seen amongst them an individual in jack-boots, buckskins, and an embroidered jacket and waistcoat, who wore a forage-cap with a gold-lace band. Then there was a lady in a blue-and-silver riding-habit and round hat; another in a rustic garb with a gipsy-hat; and a very little girl in white muslin and a wreath of roses, who rode on the smallest pony ever seen.

But though the gentlemen looked very heroic, and the ladies extremely interesting, and the very

little girl smiled in the prettiest way possible, the popular curiosity was concentrated on the group that came last in the procession. In the centre was a low gilt chariot, in which sat a portly florid-faced man, in a wide straw-hat, green-velvet coat, pantaloons with gold-lace down the seams, and Hessian boots with bullion tassels. With a bountiful display of shirt-frill, across a gay waist-coat he wore a massive gold-chain, and on his fat hand a large diamond ring.

But it was not this worthy's get-up, so regardless of expense, that astonished the rustics half so much as the strange members of the group to which he belonged. His triumphal car was drawn by a quadruped of singularly ferocious aspect that looked something between a lion and a tiger. It was led by a short thick-set negro of aspect almost as savage; while on each side the red and gold chariot stalked a Red Indian, lavishly adorned with paint, feathers, scalps, teeth, tattooing, and other insignia of war, wearing mocassins and blanket, and armed with spears.

This was wonderfully sensational to the rustic mind ; ploughboys and carters, thatchers and mowers, hedgers and ditchers, gaped with mingled awe and astonishment at this thrilling tableau. They absolutely forgot Jinks, the proprietor of the circus, in the absorbing feeling with which they regarded his savage accessories. That great man was obliged to doff his head-covering to his amazed patrons before he could elicit the usual reception. The crowd then seemed satisfied that it *was* Jinks, and the result was a burst of applause which exceeded any thing of the kind that highly popular servant of the public had ever received before.

The diamond ring was pressed with the fat palm it decorated against the flowery waistcoat, and Jinks's brown wig, made as natural as life, was seen to move forward and downward upon his shirt-frill, in grateful acknowledgment of his reception.

Then his terrible-looking steed opened his enormous jaws, disclosing most formidable tusks ; the negro grinned and showed a set of teeth almost as

carnivorous ; and his two associates set up a ringing war-whoop, and brandished their spears with a cannibal expression of countenance that made the nearest to the ropes which marked out the enclosure, feel an inclination to run away that they could only with difficulty restrain.

Lucretia Brabazon did not arrive on the ground till the mounted guard of honour that closed the procession were passing out of sight under an awning and long tent, whence it had emerged. Her appearance created almost as much excitement as did that of the proprietor of the circus ; but she unconcernedly drove into a vacant corner, nodding and exchanging salutations with her friends, with a coolness that astonished the best whips amongst them. Patty jumping down, ran to the head of the leader, and placed him in a proper position, with a degree of professional skill that was envied by the most experienced groom present.

The brass-band, that had remained in the centre of the ring, now struck up a lively air, and a white horse, bearing a young lady dressed as a

Swiss peasant, bounded into the arena, followed by the gentleman in the gold-and-green uniform, smacking a long whip. Standing on the back of her steed as he went round the circle, and gracefully playing a pair of castanets, the young lady danced the Cachuca, much to the gratification of her innumerable admirers.

Then a youth rode in on a black horse, in Highland kilt and plaid, philibeg and tartan stockings, and went through an abundance of pantomime, as well as evolutions with hoops and flags, ending with a spirited performance of the Highland fling. During this the band played with a rapidity that nearly took away their breath; while the smack of the long whip, held by the personage in green-and-gold, rained incessantly on the horse's heels.

This performance was brought to a sudden close by the unexpected tumbling over the ropes of a drunken rustic in a short smock-frock and queer little felt-hat. He staggered up to the performer, amidst vociferous shouts of "Turn him



out!" from those outside the ring, and signs of consternation from those within. The gentleman with the jack-boots stalked towards him in a highly indignant manner; but the intruder, fearless of the whip, having declared his determination to have a ride, caught hold of the reins.

The shouters outside became more vociferous to have him expelled. The gentleman with the jack-boots humanely warned him that he would break his neck; but elicited only a laugh of derision. The performer sprang to the ground; in the same instant the horse started, and the countryman made a clumsy attempt to get into his place. Laughs and jeers from the crowd accompanied him, as he clung to the steed as it proceeded on its customary round. At last the fellow contrived to stand on the saddle, though many a lurch made the highly-amused spectators anticipate a speedy roll on the sawdust.

He seemed to feel that his garments incommoded him, or else entertained some insane idea that it was bedtime; for he divested himself of his

smock-frock, then of his cravat, then of his waist-coat. Presently, very much to the surprise of the lookers-on, he went round the circus, leaning this way and that way, with nothing on but his shirt.

The female portion of the audience had mentally come to the decision that they had seen enough, when the gentleman in jack-boots smacked his whip, the band struck up a lively air, the horse increased his pace, shirt, hat, and wig were whisked off his rider, and the rustic stood upright in white satin and spangles, in the attitude of an Apollo; while a burst of applause broke from the crowd that testified their delight at the clever deception.

The next novelty was the tumbling-in of the clown. Although he was dressed in the ordinary costume, and painted red and white, in the time-honoured clownish fashion, there could be no doubt that he was a negro. A black clown was a *rara avis* in the circus; and when it was discovered that he could tumble like an accomplished acrobat, perform all sorts of grotesque

contortions, and utter the most absurd jokes, there could no longer be a doubt of his popularity.

After the audience had been sufficiently amused by a dialogue between the Ethiopian Grimaldi, as he was styled in the bills, and Mr. Merriman, the superintendent of the arena,—which, though extravagantly appreciated on Banbury Down, I do not think worth repeating here,—the latter threw aside his whip, and, taking a box and a bag from an attendant, went, accompanied by the clown, to the verge of the circle. Here, shaking up the contents of the latter, he opened it, and held it out to the nearest spectator.

There was one feature in the entertainment, as announced in the wonderful blue-and-red placards that had appeared during the week on all the dead walls to be found in a circumference of at least ten miles, which had contributed largely to bring together the bulk of its population. This was the announcement of a lottery, not only with *no blanks*, but with prizes the most attractive that could have been offered to rustic speculators.

Therefore, when the gentleman in the jack-boots presented himself with "the lucky-bag" extended for the exclusive advantage of the enlightened patrons of Jinks's "Imperial Circus," the number of shillings invested in experimental "dips" seemed beyond calculation. Big and little, rich and poor, every one seemed eager to try his or her fortune. Such a mass of silver was exchanged for tickets drawn from their leather receptacle, that the bearer of the box in which the coin was deposited screwed his paste-coloured features into the most ridiculous contortions, as though unable to endure the weight.

While this was going on, with abundance of humorous commentary between Mr. Merriman, the clown, and their customers, another portion of the performance was proceeding. This was an exhibition of vaulting and posturing, which the best judges declared excelled every thing of the kind they had ever beheld. Such feats, however marvellous, must be well known to my readers.

When this was over, a novelty in equestrianism was presented that seemed to astonish the spectators more than all that had preceded it. This was the appearance of two Indians as Aztec warriors on barebacked steeds, armed with tomahawks and bows and arrows, each dressed in tiger-skins, with a crest of gaudy feathers; in short, their copper skins were set off with a truly savage magnificence.

Their steeds rushed on, apparently as swift as the wind, with their riders, now seated in the ordinary fashion, now lying their lengths, now standing up, brandishing tomahawks, directing arrows at an approaching foe, hanging down to pick up the weapon they had thrown at an enemy, and yelling their warcry with a din that resounded far above the clamour of the brass-band, which was going *fortissimo* and *prestissimo* to an extent no one could have conceived possible.

Lucretia Brabazon, from her elevated position, had witnessed the various performances with a fair amount of amusement; but her greatest plea-

sure was derived from a conversation she carried on with various gentlemen on horseback or in carriages, who were within talking distance. She was evidently in the highest spirits; and the laughing around her drew many a curious outsider to that part of the Down.

Every now and then she was seen to take from a breast-pocket an oblong little book, and with a pencil to write therein; but the lookers-on here did *not* see most of the game—indeed, were quite in the dark as to the purport of these hurried inscriptions, which, there could be no doubt, were regarded with as much interest by the gentlemen about her as by herself. So they tried to get nearer.

Little Patty Clark was standing at the head of the leader, quite as much an object of attention as her mistress; but in her circle there reigned a profound silence. The wearers of brown smalls and gaiters, of white cords and tops, of plush with stockings and shoes, of heavy ankle-boots and coarse corduroys, seemed alike tongue-tied. They

nudged each other, winked, nodded, kept their mouths and their eyes equally wide open—but there was a spell upon their organs of speech.

They gazed upon the natty hat with the gold-band, upon the stand-up collar and silk-tie fastened with a horseshoe-pin, and upon the curious livery with the Brabazon crest on the gilt buttons, as if these objects were invested with a supernatural fascination.

A superannuated helper in a sleeved waistcoat, and thick overalls covering very bandy legs, after staring his eyes nearly out of his shock head, at last turned away with a heavy sigh, and crushed his napless white hat upon his wrinkled forehead.

Patty appeared quite indifferent to the excitement she had created. She did not seem to see the gaping rustics, or the bewildered jockeys, grooms, trainers, and stable-boys. She kept her eye upon the horse, whose head was a little above her own—sometimes patted it, sometimes addressed it—raising her glance occasionally towards her

mistress, but never allowing it to dwell upon the astonished faces around her.

There was another change in the Circus. The performer was now a mounted Bedouin, in turban and burnous, with tufted spear in hand, flying over the desert as if pursued by a hostile tribe. He went through a good deal of pantomime of a warlike character, till he appeared to have distanced his enemies, when his spear changed to a pipe-stick, and he sat cross-legged smoking his chibouque as his Arab lay down on the sawdust.

Suddenly a noise was heard—the chief vaulted into the Turkish saddle, and drawing his sabre, cut and slashed away before and behind with tremendous energy, as if surrounded by bloodthirsty foes, shouting vociferously in Arabic; his steed tearing along at a tremendous pace, snorting and shaking his long mane and tail, as if fully appreciating his master's danger.

This animated scene excited immense applause. Miss Brabazon joined loudly in the bravos that came from her male friends. She had seen the



equitation of the Arabs, and pronounced this an excellent imitation. She was willing to admit that Jinks's troupe were capital actors—indeed, she acknowledged that she had once a man in her service—a genuine Bedouin—and she doubted, though he was a first-rate horseman, that he could have made a similar performance equally effective.

There now only remained the distribution of the prizes, which the gentleman in the jack-boots proceeded to read out from a list he held in his hand—a breathless interest pervading the entire assembly.

“One cow and calf,” “a mare and foal,” “a sow and litter of pigs,” “a carriage, harness, and pair of ponies,” were the chief; and they fell to different individuals. Each resided a long way off; nevertheless, directly their names were mentioned, the worthy farmer, clergyman, school-master, or parish clerk, stepped forward and received an order for the delivery of his treasure—with which he presently disappeared in extraordinary good humour, and was never seen again.

A few "gown-pieces" fell to persons far better known, and their names elicited shouts of acclamation; but the bulk of the prizes seemed to consist of rather trumpery cotton handkerchiefs. These fell chiefly to the humbler spectators, and the recipients in turn became objects of popular applause. This put them in good humour; so that every one appeared contented with his or her rather questionable good fortune.

While the distribution was going on, the laughing around the tandem became louder than ever—especially when a gown-piece was announced as the prize of Sir Harry Chester, that now dismounted dragoon evidently not knowing what to do with his acquisition. It was only a printed cotton, and the pattern apparently was not to the taste of either the Squire or Lord Vernon; for though it was offered to them in the handsomest way, both were profuse of thanks, but could not think of depriving their friend of so valuable a possession.

About this period a smart young fellow of the

jockey class pushed his way through the gaping throng that encircled Patty Clark. She recognised him with a nod.

"Has your governor entered the black colt for the Delamere Maiden Stakes?" he asked in an undertone.

"Yes, Dick," was the reply. "She's been taking the odds against him."

"What about the filly?" was the next question.

"She's to run for the Sweepstakes. Nancy Green and I tried the two in a gallop this morning."

"Which is fastest?"

Patty gave a knowing shake of her head. "*We* don't let out the secrets of the stable, Dick," was said with marked emphasis on the pronoun.

The jockey laughed. Those within hearing looked from one to another with countenances expressive of superlative admiration.

"I wouldn't mind risking a crown on that colt, Patty. Master bred him, and I've known

him from a foal. He's one of the likeliest two-year-olds I've seen this many a day."

"*We* don't want to be told that, Dick."

Again a glance of intense satisfaction was telegraphed from one to another.

"Nancy Green and I have agreed to take seven to four against him," was added carelessly, to the increasing astonishment of the highly interested audience.

Dick now gave a knowing shake of *his* head.

"I should like to do a little business," he said presently. "I'll bet you five to four against the filly."

"What in?" was demanded.

"Oh, shillings if you like."

"*We* never bet less than half-crowns," was the reply.

"Very well; I'm willing. Say five to four in half-crowns against the filly winning the Sweepstakes."

"Done!" cried Patty; and, to the inexpressible amazement of the lookers-on, she pulled a

little book from her pocket, and hurriedly wrote down the bet.

"Patty!" shouted a voice from the box-seat of a four-in-hand.

She looked up, and instantly put her forefinger to the gold-laced rim of her hat. It was the Marquis of Delamere who had called her.

"Your animals are uncommon well groomed," observed his lordship, looking at them critically through his eyeglass.

"Yes, my lord."

All the gentlemen on the drag seemed to think they were bound to echo their noble friend's opinion, some of them looking critically at the horses, others at their groom. Both underwent the inspection with the same indifference.

"That harness, too, looks prodigious well."

The forefinger was again thrown up, and the respectful acknowledgment of the compliment repeated.

The gentlemen on the roof of the drag perpetrated their echoes and continued their scrutiny.

They affected the more attention as they believed that Delamere was about to "take a rise" out of "that queer Miss Brabazon." The young Marquis, however, did not feel himself equal to it.

"'Pon my life, now!" he exclaimed, turning to that lady languidly, "you do the thing in first-rate style. But that groom of yours is really the neatest part of the turn-out."

"Exactly what I intended, Lord Delamere," was the reply.

She nodded to her attendant, which the latter at once understood; for, grasping the rein of the leader, she drew him quietly out of the throng of equipages; the whip smacked as soon as he was clear, and as he started off on a trot to the road down the hill, Patty with a quick run placed her foot on the step and swung herself into her seat.

"There!" cried one of the hitherto tongue-tied circle to his neighbour, "I told yer she wore taps."

The astounding fact of a woman wearing top-boots, which had that moment been made manifest

to all near enough to see, came as a climax to the series of marvels they had just witnessed. To them it heralded a social revolution, the very idea of which seemed so completely to take their breath away, that when a cheer was got up to mark Miss Brabazon's departure, they had no power to join in it.

A few minutes later the entire assemblage broke up, and, apparently vastly edified with their day's amusement, returned to their several homes.

It was at a rather late hour in the following morning that Mr. Jinks sat in what he called his "snuggery," taking his breakfast. The place so styled was a miniature house upon wheels, with a smart green door and a bright brass knocker; moreover having windows with Venetian blinds and festooned curtains, that made it from without quite a genteel residence.

The Imperial Circus, of which he was the sole proprietor, had been sent on, after the performances of the previous day, to a large market-town about twenty miles distant; and as the pro-

gress of its caravans was slow, he knew very well that he could follow at his leisure. So, having seen every thing carefully packed, and every body conveniently placed for transit, he mounted the steps of his small mansion, opened the brass-knocked door, and, in a nicely-carpeted, comfortably-furnished room, presently made himself as thoroughly at home as if he had been in the pleasantest street of a cheerful city, instead of on one of the bleakest and loneliest parts of Cheshire.

To tell the exact truth, he made himself so very comfortable that night, he did not leave his snug bedroom—on the other side of that snug parlour—till some hours beyond his usual time of beginning the day. Nevertheless, he commenced the meal which had been liberally prepared for him with an excellent appetite. It was obvious from his look and manner that Mr. Jinks was a prosperous man; moreover that he was far from dissatisfied either with himself or his belongings.

His reflections as he broke his egg, and his meditations as he swallowed his coffee, were de-



cidedly characteristic of a contented spirit. He knew that Jinks's Imperial Circus was a thriving concern. He was equally well aware that Jinks was the sole cause of its prosperity. And why was it so? he would ask himself. Because Jinks knew what he was about, was the reply.

As the carefully-boiled eggs, the nicely-buttered toast, and the fragrant beverage disappeared into his decidedly extensive corporation, he indulged in a train of thought which, as it will assist the reader in forming a proper estimate of the man, and will help a little in the development of this story, I shall venture to repeat.

“That panther-car is a decided success, and is peculiar to Jinks's Imperial Circus. The Aztec Warriors, too, are also a great success. No similar establishment in the three kingdoms can show any thing of the kind. Then there's the Bedouin Sheik—he's quite a star. Nothing half so telling was ever before exhibited. As for the Ethiopian Grimaldi, it's wonderful how the people have taken to him. It was a lucky hour for me

when I fell in with that fellow Whittler, and agreed to take them and have them trained for the Imperial Circus. He certainly got them up surprisingly well, and is very useful in the ring. Capital, too, he is in representing the winners of the great prizes. *That's a prodigious success."*

Here Mr. Jinks looked complacently on a box that lay in a corner of the room. No doubt it held the result of the previous day's performance.

As he poured a fresh supply from the steaming coffee-pot, the current of thought began to flow afresh.

"But Whittler is a Yankee. Now, I don't know why, but I never could like a Yankee. They are such an over-reaching set; have such precious artful dodges, and are always a taking-in somebody. Not as Whittler is likely to *do* me. I'm Yorkshire born and bred. A Yankee must get up uncommon early to take in a Yorkshireman. Jinks knows what he's about, and he won't trust that fellow Whittler a bit more than he can help. The money is made as safe as the bank."

Again Mr. Jinks cast a glance of peculiar satisfaction at the box in the corner.

At this moment another door, leading into the kitchen of the miniature residence, was rudely flung open, and a youth, his hair streaming with perspiration, his face in a red heat, his clothes splashed from head to foot, staggered in. In this state of excitement and pickle it was impossible to recognise the Apollo of the preceding day.

"O guv'nor!" he cried out, panting for breath.

Jinks started from his seat with a look of amazement and inquiry.

"O guv'nor!" repeated the travel-stained star rider of the troupe.

"What's the matter, Mr. Gubbins?"

"The Aztec Warriors—"

"Dear me! I hope they are not very much hurt."

"The Bedouin Sheik—"

"He too! He will be a loss certainly."

"The Ethiopian Grimaldi—"

"Poor man! I shall never again get so popular a clown."

"Mr. Whittler—"

"This is dreadful. What, in the name of mischief, has happened?"

"O guv'nor, they've *bolted*!"

"Bolted!" repeated the circus proprietor, as if scarcely understanding the intelligence.

"Yes, guv'nor. They were riding the best horses, and all at once started as hard as they could tear on the road to Birkenhead. So I took the trotting-pony, and made the best of my way here."

Mr. Jinks slapped his forehead with his hand; and his rough Yorkshire face expressed a near approach to apoplexy. Suddenly he rushed to the box already referred to, and with a force he had never possessed before, burst it open. He uttered a cry; he tottered back; he fell into the arms of the attentive Gubbins.

It was full of stones.

## CHAPTER II.

### TO DOVER AND BACK.

NEVER did the most bustling, thriving, and well-conducted of the Cinque Ports appear so bustling, so thriving, or so orderly, as on a certain morning in a particular year in which the current of this story has now arrived. From the newly-built pier to the ancient castle, from the closely-packed barracks on the heights to the straggling cottages in the suburbs, from the busy ship-chandlers on the quays to the fashionable drapery establishments in Snargate Street, there flowed along the pavement like a tide a fast-increasing throng of soldiers, sailors, officers of the army and navy, captains and mates of merchantmen, porters, tradesmen, ladies, hawkers, mechanics, and all the other ingredients of a seaport population ;

while the narrow streets were as well filled with wagons, carts, hackney-coaches, carriages, barrows, and trucks, many heavily laden with merchandise or luggage, and making the best of their way apparently from the Custom-house quay to the principal inns in the town.

Every body in Dover seemed to be in a hurry on that particular morning. The young ladies in their gay toilettes rushed out of the Circulating Library with the last novel of Bulwer, or the last poem of Tennyson, evidently intensely eager to become acquainted with its attractive pages; the elder ladies, becomingly shawled and bonneted, with more gravity were hurrying from shop to shop as if apprehensive that the day's dinner might be lost by delay; the elder gentlemen visitors were proceeding in hot haste towards the pier, generally glass in hand, to inspect the new arrivals from the Continent as the packets came in; and the younger gentlemen, generally affecting a marine costume, in straw-hats, pea-jackets, and white trousers, were diligently inspecting the

shipping in the basins, displaying immense nautical knowledge in the remarks respecting them they interchanged.

People were thronging in and out of the Custom-house like bees about a hive, while in the dock the vessels that were loading or unloading, preparing to put to sea, or stripping for the purpose of undergoing repairs, seemed to require such a constant ascending and descending of amphibious-looking masses of well-worn tarpaulin and patched and tarry sail-cloth, bearing burthens of most awkward dimensions, that the landmen could not help wondering whence such uncouth objects came. They were the dock-labourers, and monopolised the heaviest and dirtiest work going on in the port.

Loud were the sounds proceeding from heavy hammers, from gangs of men at work aloft or on deck, from shouting captains and vociferous mates; and strong was the smell of paint, of tar, of bilgewater, and grease; but the enthusiastic admirers of marine studies seemed to like the music and

the perfume, for they stood watching the scene with a good deal of interest; and the oaths in Dutch that came from the busy decks of the *Vanderhilder* of Amsterdam, seemed quite as edifying as the screaming exclamations and imprecations interchanged by the crews of the *Marie* of Marseilles and the *Santa Trinita* of Cadiz, the bowsprit of the French ship having run down the bulwarks of the Spaniard, as one was entering, the other leaving the harbour.

Near the pier all sorts of conveyances were in waiting; conspicuous amongst them was a handsome new travelling-carriage with smart hammer-cloth and bright panels, on which an imposing coat of arms, surmounted by an earl's coronet, had been carefully emblazoned—the same crest being repeated on the silver harness which attached two pairs of grays, that the postillions in their gay jackets and caps, clean leathers and top-boots, could with difficulty restrain.

The vehicle contained only one person—an elderly gentleman of particularly bland and cheer-



ful aspect, whose neatly-frilled shirt and spotless white cravat excited quite as much consideration from a group of young officers belonging to the garrison, who stood at a little distance scrutinising the spectacle, as did his courtly demeanour and aristocratic equipage.

With the usual facility of idlers, they discussed his history, his character, and his errand. Ensign Tootles, who prided himself on knowing a thing or two—he had not left school six months, and was singularly backward for a youth of seventeen—confidently pronounced him the peer whose quarterings were emblazoned on the carriage. Dr. Muffington, the assistant-surgeon in the same regiment, who was a few years the subaltern's senior, as sagaciously declared the object of their regard to be a happy father waiting to welcome his heiress and her bridegroom on their return to England from their bridal tour.

Lieutenant Poppet, who, as he had just attained his majority, thought it incumbent on him to have an opinion of his own, decided that "his

lordship" had come there to receive his eldest son and his tutor, after the two had done the grand tour, and carry them to his country-seat.

Captain de Spruce, however, who affected a miraculous knowledge of fashionable life, and was regarded as an oracle by the juniors, pooh-poohed all these ideas. He looked mysterious, hinted something very ambiguous about state affairs, and, in an undertone, decided that the occupant of the carriage was a certain noble lord, who held a high post in the government, and that his business there was to carry to town some person of distinction coming over from the Czar, or the Emperor of Austria, or at least the King of Prussia, on a secret mission of the utmost importance.

The group accepted this dictum implicitly—some even recognised the features of the distinguished statesman, innocently wondering why the likeness had not struck them before. He, however, continued to gaze about him, as indifferent to the observation of his neighbours as to

their speculations. Now he glanced towards the heights, now he looked over the harbour, now he dwelt upon the lofty slope indissolubly connected with the fame of the great English dramatist, by whom it has been so vividly described.

There was a thoughtful earnest look in those singularly clear, shrewd, penetrating eyes, that seemed to be somewhat at variance with the expression of *bonhomie* that played about the round, sleek, good-humoured face. It was not the look of a mere spectator—it intimated that, though the vision took in the fortifications, the shipping, the cliff—in short every thing visible seaward or landward in that ancient British port, the thoughts were far away, absorbed with interests compared with which the picturesque attractions around him were as dross to refined gold.

Dover at this time presented a rather different aspect to the Dover of the present day. Though the principal port in communication with the Continent, its harbour was confined and inconvenient. It could neither boast of an Admiralty Pier, a

railway, nor any of the great improvements and defences which modern engineering science has of late years thrown around it. Still, its grand old castle, its noble cliff, and many other time-honoured landmarks and memorable associations made it one of the most noticeable places in England—a place in which no Englishman could find himself without experiencing an intense nationality when thinking how often it has formed a stage on which important scenes in the drama of his country's greatness had been rehearsed.

Arthur Calverley happened to be passing from the Custom-house quay on this particular morning, having promised to meet Geraldine and Lord Fitzmaurice: they who had been trying the healing influence of a celebrated German Spa, and were then crossing the Channel; and his attention had been attracted to the well-appointed equipage and its highly-respectable occupant. Something in the quarterings on the panels seemed familiar to him, and he stopped to examine them. The supporters, too, those rampant griffins, were certainly old ac-

quaintances; but he could not distinctly remember where he had seen them.

"Here she comes!" cried Captain de Spruce; and immediately his brother-officers, indeed all the spectators, gazed out at sea with great intentness in the direction of a steamer that was making the harbour. At the same moment the carriage-door opened, an elderly gentleman in a paletôt, a travelling-cap, and fashionably-cut clothes of black cloth, sprung out, and made his way briskly to the pier.

Arthur followed to the pier-head, where many persons had assembled, apparently to witness the debarkation of the passengers on board the approaching packet.

The Captain presently lost sight of him amongst them; but, making his way forward, gained a position from which he had a good view of the deck of the boat as she glided up to the stairs. It was the Calais packet, and was piled with merchandise, and crowded with passengers. The latter were a motley collection, composed of

tourists who *had* been "doing" the Rhine, fashionables who had exhausted the gaieties of Brussels, students who had acquired some learning and a good deal of dissipation at Göttingen or Heidelberg, artists with portfolios bulging with studies of picturesque scenery and mediæval architecture, gamblers rich with the spoils of Hamburg and Baden-Baden, picture-dealers with extensive collections of Dutch and Flemish masters of doubtful authenticity, young military critics fresh from the field of Waterloo with opinions highly condemnatory of the great emperor's tactics and rather qualified approbation of his conqueror, and invalids of every age and condition who had been trying the virtues of the various "Brunnens" with a result more evident on their purses than their constitutions.

Captain Calverley could not distinguish his friends; and as he was scanning the group among which he had expected to find them, he observed a lady of stately figure, handsomely dressed in a pelisse trimmed with ermine, talking in a very

animated manner to the maimed Cornet. He could not see her face, it was concealed by the fold of a white lace veil that fell from one of those large bonnets then fashionable.

Perhaps it may have been her kindly words, some expression of womanly sympathy, excited by the empty sleeve of the young Cornet of hussars, that made his eyes glow so brightly. Be this as it may, certain it is the young hero felt proud and happy in the honour her notice conferred upon him.

Suddenly the sunshine seemed to pass from his delicate features, and they became impressed with a feeling of something closely resembling disappointment. Arthur looked to ascertain what had brought about this change, when he noticed the gentleman whom he had followed from the travelling-carriage, advancing towards the wearer of the ermine pelisse, cap in hand, bowing with impressive courtesy, and in a very lively manner welcoming her to England. The lady, with at least equal grace, and almost as much vivacity,

held out her hand as he approached, and returned his greeting with a like cordiality.

A lively conversation ensued. Presently, as though in answer to some question, a tall thin figure—a female in a dark dress closely veiled—glided forward, as if to be presented to the stranger, to whom she bent a humble, apparently a reverential curtsy, seemed to listen respectfully to something he said to her; then, with the same sense of humility in her lowly genuflection, glided again into the background.

There could be no doubt, in Arthur's mind, that the gentlewoman who had first attracted his attention was a person of high social position, and that her silent companion was a confidential domestic: but who the gallant old gentleman was, he could not so easily satisfy himself.

He now descended the steps to go on board. While pushing his way through the throng of passengers eager to land, most of them laughing and conversing with long-parted friends, he found himself close to the group I have just named—the



lady and gentleman in advance, talking as gaily as their exultant neighbours, the dark attendant in the rear, still solemn, gloomy, and reserved. Her features were behind a thick black veil, therefore he could not distinguish them.

The former were apparently absorbed in their conversation, and having their faces close to each other, Arthur had passed them unnoticed. The imperfect view he had of the lady, merely assured him that she had reached a somewhat advanced matronly age. Her face being turned from him, he was able to observe only the fairness of her complexion, and the silvery whiteness of a small curl that had obtruded from beneath a lace cap. The countenance of her companion he had no opportunity of noticing.

Had he been in the slightest degree conscious of the powerful influence these persons would exert over his future, he would of course have paid them more attention, and could not have failed to recognise in the returning travellers two persons whose individuality had been too strongly

impressed upon his mind, when in its most impressionable state, ever to be erased from it this side the grave. Their disguise was so perfect, so many years had elapsed since they had met, while few things could have been more improbable than their re-appearance under circumstances so extremely dissimilar as those by which they were now surrounded, that nothing was more natural than that he should have hurried after his friend without giving either of the strangers, as he considered them, another thought.

He presently found his young comrade and his sister in the cabin, giving directions about their luggage. Their greeting was most cordial; and Arthur was delighted to see that both had benefited by their trip. During a very pleasant gossip, he succeeded in transferring them to the Ship Hotel; and having led them into a comfortable private room, he left them to make arrangements for post-horses and to order refreshments.

He wandered into the assembly-room, which was entirely deserted; indeed, in consequence of

the arrival of a foreign potentate, the whole staff of the establishment seemed to be in close attendance on his imperial highness and his numerous suite. Not a waiter or a chambermaid was to be seen.

Arthur strolled, therefore, into the large room, to amuse himself by examining its decorations, till some one should appear who could attend to his wants. The framed prints were duly examined, familiar though they were. The Woodman, The escaped Lioness attacking the Horses of the Mail-coach, The Rustic gazing admiringly at a fat Sow and a Litter of Pigs, View of Dover Castle, A Series of Hunting-scenes, The Battle of Trafalgar, The Death of General Wolfe,—all were carefully scrutinised.

Presently he found himself before a large folding-screen, placed away in a corner of the long-room. It was covered with caricatures and humorous prints, and he entertained himself for some time with the farcical creations of Rowlandson and Gillray. Ascertaining that the other side was similarly ornamented, he squeezed himself be-

tween the corner and the wall, and was soon as much amused with the drolleries he found there. Many of the actors in them, royal, noble, and fashionable, he easily recognised.

He was not, however, so much absorbed in his amusement as to be unable to hear the door of the room creak. It was opened, closed, and then locked. Involuntarily he stood still. He heard footsteps advancing, presently they came close to the screen, and stopped.

"I have brought you here," was said in French and in a man's voice, "to be secure from interruption. I wish to impress upon your mind the necessity of forgetting your identity in the important service you have been selected to perform."

"Yes, monseigneur," was replied in the same language, in a female voice, the accent singularly harsh.

Arthur began to feel embarrassed in no slight degree. Here was a revelation impending, with which he ought to have nothing to do. Appa-

rently a foreign nobleman, perhaps his serene highness who had so recently arrived, had entered the apartment, for the purpose of making a confidential communication, under the impression that he had secured perfect privacy.

Before he could make up his mind to declare his vicinity the dialogue was resumed, if dialogue it could be called—for the first speaker seemed to leave nothing for his companion to do but to utter a brief and very humble acquiescence. In consequence of his voice dropping frequently into an indistinct whisper, Arthur could not always catch his meaning, but heard enough of the sentence to excite his curiosity exceedingly; for it assured him that the grand duke, or whoever he was, was directing the woman to act as his agent in some business that required careful disguise and profound deception.

Content with the conviction that it was no affair of his, and that a betrayal of his position might be attended with awkward consequences, he remained quiet. The whispering continued,

but frequently in a most tantalising manner. Invariably, however, the earnest directions of the great man elicited from his female agent the same readiness to follow them.

As far as Arthur could guess at what escaped his ear, to fill up the imperfect sentence, some treachery was in contemplation against an English family of distinction—indeed, he sometimes fancied against many families; but their names, as well as the nature of the danger by which they were menaced, he could not ascertain.

The very vagueness of the mischief made the affair to him doubly exciting. What could be the plot, and who could be the plotters? He became more and more eager to know; but dared not stir. What followed, which he heard distinctly, astonished him most of all.

“And now, Madame,” said the man, “for the present I dismiss you, in the full confidence of a conscientious fulfilment of your new duties.”

“Your blessing, Monseigneur,” was the, to him, extraordinary reply.

Arthur heard the commencement of a Latin benediction pronounced with great fervour. It struck him that he might seize this opportunity for obtaining a sight of these conspirators. So, quickly mounting a chair close to the screen, he looked down over the top. He observed the broad back of a gentleman, and the top of a white head stooping over the kneeling figure of a woman in a dark dress ; her hands clasped, her head bowed forward in an attitude of absorbed devotion.

He could not see the features of either ; but there was no difficulty in his identifying them by their dress with two of the three persons whom he had seen on the deck of the Calais packet.

While intently scrutinising their appearance, the benediction ceased ; the woman rose to her feet ; and he saw a face too deeply engraven on his memory not to be recognised in a moment.

It was the same hard, gloomy, rugged physiognomy Arthur had first beheld lit up by the spectral moonlight when he gazed out of the window of his little chamber in the Abbey ruins down upon

the cemetery, and discerned, besides that terrible face, a pair of bare gaunt arms digging a grave he then feared was intended for himself.

Yes, it was the same; only harder, darker, more stony and cold than ever. It fascinated him now as it fascinated him then; and he continued to gaze, feeling as if turning to stone under the influence of the Medusa-like aspect, till a fearful scream, and her sudden fall at the feet of her companion, assured the Captain that he had been discovered. He turned round hurriedly, and leapt down. A door was behind him. He passed rapidly through it into an ante-room. Here he was somewhat startled by observing Geraldine clasped in the affectionate embrace of the elderly lady in the ermine cloak. Indeed, so absorbed were they in this affectionate greeting or farewell, whichever it might be, that his intrusion was not noticed.

Softly opening another door, he entered a passage near a staircase, which conducted him to another that led to the back entrance of the hotel.



Servants were hurrying to and fro, but no one paid him any attention ; and he presently found himself in a busy narrow street, his mind in a whirl of excitement at what he had seen and heard.

Arthur passed rapidly through the throng, disregarding of every thing but the tumult of thoughts and feelings this extraordinary incident had created. Presently he breathed more freely. He was now in the open country beyond the town ; a retired spot on the elevated downs, where the breezy air cooled his hot temples ; and resting on the soft green turf, he surrendered himself to a retrospection, which, though long uncared for, fading before the influence of newer interests, came before him now with the vividness of objects presented to a revived life.

Arthur seemed again to look upon the picturesque vista of receding arches and graceful windows, with the tranquil moonlight mellowing the tints of the ancient carving, and enveloping with a solemn majesty those grand masses of masonry ;

among which were grouped the dark-robed sisters, whose melodious devotions were wafted up to him charged with a spiritual sweetness that suggested an angelic source—an idea the intermittent gushes of the rival nightingales assisted in strengthening.

He again beheld the seraphic face that had once filled his youthful imagination with visions of purity and grace, as the saint-like figure knelt before him; as the dove-like eyes, overflowing with ineffable tenderness, bent timidly to the ground; as the thrilling voice murmured, soft as an angel's whisper, the prayer that mingled confidently with his own.

How fared the ambition of his manhood? What had come of the arduous struggles for social elevation, in the absorbing reality of which he had lost sight of that hallowed romance? Where, too, was that more practical devotion which had been founded on a similarity, that promised the perfectibility of earth with the sanctity of Heaven? Lost, like the quiet tone of life's

every-day horizon in the golden glory of a returning sunrise. The actual faded from him, as a desert landscape before the weary pilgrim ; and the impossible filled its place with sparkling fountains that could never quench human thirst, and verdant groves that could never refresh mortal eye.

Arthur's excitement at last subsided, and the mirage passed away, leaving him with a sense of shame for having surrendered his mind to such influences. Why should he set his soul upon the impracticable ? Why should the unattainable be the object of his aspirations, longings, and dreams ? All such thoughts and feelings were as visionary, he was forced to acknowledge, as the speculations of a monomaniac.

Years had passed since he had seen that divine apparition, and the rigour of a severe monastic life, in all likelihood, while investing the convent-pupil with the beauty of holiness, had divested her of the divinity of beauty. There was a terrible probability, too, that so tender a plant might have faded

in the chill atmosphere of the cloister ; and he shuddered as he recalled the image of the gloomy sister plying her mattock in the solemn night, with the bats and the owls wheeling round her cowed head, and the penitential choral swelling upon the midnight air.

He rose, but though he shook off the feverish dream that had so disturbed his nature, and recalled the healthier influence which had superseded those morbid impressions that had been its source, there existed so intimate a connexion between the two, that some link would constantly arise to bring him back to the prior state of feeling. The recollection of Fanny Scudamore now seemed to fill all his soul with a rosy sunlight—her glowing beauty, the passionate tenderness of the *liebeslied* they had sung together ; more than all, the stolen but permitted caress, drove from his mind what he felt he ought to consider only as a boyish dream.

Presently he found himself dwelling admiringly on Geraldine's tenderness and simplicity ; the

image on his mind, however, seemed but the reflection in a mirror, of a familiar excellence. The thrilling music of her voice he permitted to take possession of his heart ; but he heard it as the echo of a blissful harmony that had once filled his entire being.

Arthur endeavoured to recal the mysterious dialogue he had so recently overheard ; but the first phrase brought back another secret conversation, of which he had as strangely become an auditor, in the most memorable adventure of his youth. So confusedly did the two communications mingle, that he could not define their meaning with reliable exactness. All he could gather from them was, that Geraldine was menaced by a mysterious danger, and a conviction followed that he was bound to watch over her safety.

The real triumphed over the ideal so far, that Arthur determined at once to seek out the man who was evidently playing an important part in a drama, the object of which he did not comprehend, and obtain from him, if possible, a knowledge of

his intentions, at least so far as they might affect persons dear to him, as associated with his past or present life.

Arthur hurried back to the hotel; but as he approached, he beheld a travelling-carriage leaving the door. His eager inquiries elicited the unwelcome information that the elderly lady and her attendant had departed, under the escort of the gentleman who had brought them from the packet.

On returning to his friends, he could not avoid noticing an unusual reserve in their demeanour. Something evidently deeply affected their spirits. They had lost all their vivacity. The youthful impulsiveness of the gay-hearted Cornet, and the tender joyousness of his sister, had entirely vanished.

Arthur arranged every thing for their speedy arrival in town, though his mind was filled with apprehensions and misgivings. He could not help connecting this change in the manner of his friends with the sudden appearance of Sister Gudule.

What could be the meaning of that strange woman coming to such a place, and having that mysterious conference with such a man? He asked again and again; but never got a reply.

## CHAPTER III.

### PORCHESTER HOUSE.

“A FIRST-RATE run, Captain; without a check from breaking cover at Pyleherry Copse to running into him at the foot of Highdown Hill—thirty miles at the very least, not a yard less. Zounds, sir! men were men in those days, and rode to hounds, over every thing, neck or nothing, sir. That’s your sort! Not like your modern milksops, all Macassar oil and *mille fleur*, who crane at a bullfinch, and dismount to open a gate a lame dog would go over at a trot.”

Arthur did not know whether he was included in this contemptible category; but as he had no intention of quarrelling with Jack Scudamore at his own hospitable table in town, he let the old



fox-hunter make his odious comparison without so much as a word of dissent.

But who could look at his honest broad red face, and shiny bald cranium fringed with silvery hair, and notice the hearty good-will and downright honesty of purpose that flashed out of his pleasant blue eyes, and think for a moment of quarrelling?

Nobody ever differed with Jack Scudamore. The good fellows of his numerous acquaintance would as soon think of maintaining a dispute with a hogshead of claret—which his expansive corporation seemed striving to resemble—as one with the ex-master of the Delamere Hunt; for, alas! that fearless as jovial master of hounds had grown too corpulent for hunting, and, when free from his frequent torment, was obliged to run his runs over and over again to the friends who were willing to enjoy his punch with his loquacity.

“But, uncle,” observed Lord Fitzmaurice mildly, from the other end of the table, “if you were to see the fellows at Melton Mowbray, I am

sure you would acknowledge that they did the thing in very good style."

"What *you* may call a good style, Fitz," replied the old gentleman; "a style, my boy, as safe as a three-legged stool."

And his fat chin manifested its triple folds, and his capacious mouth expanded to utter a sonorous laugh, the joviality of which it was impossible to resist.

"You should have been with me," he added exultantly, "the day of the find at Pylchberry Copse. There you would have seen the proper style, if you like. I was on Roanoake, sire of Hieover, who won the Dorrington Steeplechase two years later. There never was a better horse to ride across country. He'd go at any thing. No brook was too wide for him, no fence too high. Zounds, sir! he'd have gone at a hayrick if I'd put him at it."

As the last assertion was addressed to Captain Calverley, he felt bound to express his admiration for so very valuable a hunter.

"Reynard seemed inclined to take such uncommon good care of his brush," resumed the old sportsman, "that the hounds were kept at so long a scent as sufficed to tell them the way he had gone. And yet the pace was tremendous. It was besides as trying a line as could be found in the whole county. Ditches, walls, double hedges, banks, five-barred gates, and high ox-fences in number enough to pump the wind out of the best horse-flesh ever saddled. I never knew so many falls; I never saw so many horses brought to a standstill in a single field. My Lord Vernon had a mare called Cleopatra. She won the Hunters' Stakes at Kingscote Races only a month before. Zounds, sir! she broke down in a meadow little more than five miles from the start."

Arthur ventured to express a proper amount of sympathy for the noble owner.

"She cost a hatful of money, Captain, only the preceding week, and was led home not worth a five-pound note. But then my friend Sir Harry Chester," he added, as his guest betrayed aston-

ishment, "he was worse off; for he rode his famous gelding Bob. Such a fencer! Sir Harry backed Bob for a hundred guineas against the Duke of Porchester's Arab, Saladin, to run a measured mile on the downs, and won by a length. Yet Bob, going over a quickset, tumbled into a quarry and broke his owner's collar-bone."

The gallant Captain tried to divide his commiseration in a sportsmanlike manner between Bob and Sir Harry.

"Parson Wilbraham, who never was thrown before, was flung into a turnip-field in the first burst; and Major Moppetts, of the militia, broke his arm in tumbling over a five-barred gate that led into the lane where he had a second horse in waiting. Old Driver, the lawyer, was nearly drowned in the river, into which his cob fell backwards; and Dr. Wigglesby was run away with by his steed as the fox was breaking cover, and was left struggling in the marsh at Sockington Hollow till some men from the farm on the hill beyond managed to drag him out."

"But how did *you* get on, uncle?" inquired the Viscount.

"Pretty fair, my boy; pretty fair. I chaged Roanoake for Tippoo Saib at the Three Bridges. Tippoo was a gray gelding of prodigious power and endurance, with a tremendous stride; so I got over the ground in first-rate style, and was shortly pretty well up with the hounds, that I could see mounting a hill in my front. As I was taking a stiffish leap, I flew right over young Tilbury—son of Sir Marmaduke Tilbury of Tilbury Manor—who had been thrown a few minutes before, going over that identical fence, and had not yet quite recovered from the shock. 'Sharp run this, Mr. Tilbury!' said I; but before the young chap could exercise his somewhat-scattered wits, I was far out of hearing.

"You see, Captain, one has hardly time to be civil when riding after hounds at a break-neck pace. If your neighbour has touched the grass, all that can be expected from you is, to keep your horse from trampling on him. If the scent is good, and

you are well up, your neighbour must needs help himself, or wait till the more backward of the hunt can come to his assistance."

Captain Calverley readily acknowledged that first come (to grief) was rarely first served in the hunting-field.

"As I was hurried away, I knew that the same fate would happen to me should I be thrown. Zounds, sir! in the very next field Tippoo slipped, then stopped short, while about to take his leap, and threw me clean over his head.

"'Hullo, Jack, is that *you*?' cried my Lord Vernon, while I was sitting up, examining the state of my limbs. My lord was now on his famous horse Emperor, and was pressing on for a front place. I had barely time to see him passing through a gap that opened upon a steep bank that descended into a green lane, when he was out of sight.

"'Sharp run this, Mr. Scudamore!' exclaimed another voice passing over me, just as I had come to the conclusion that I was not particularly hurt.

Zounds, sir! it was young Tilbury; and to make the matter more aggravating, he had caught and was riding *my horse*.

“ ‘Stop, stop!’ I shouted, and sprang up with an alacrity which proved that I possessed the full use of my limbs. I shouted to the winds. Tippoo’s stride took him into the green lane before I had ran a dozen yards.”

“Uncommon cool of young Tilbury,” remarked Lord Fitzmaurice.

His friend expressed a similar opinion.

“Cool! zounds, sir, it was about the coolest thing I had ever seen done in the hunting-field. But I was determined to be even with him. I saw *his* horse at a distance, and after a little trouble managed to mount him. Then rode about half a mile, where my third horse had been placed. He was Brother to Highflyer who won the Doncaster St. Leger of that season—an animal of amazing speed and bottom. I was soon gaining ground upon the pack which were in full cry, with their fox not very far in advance. The huntsman and

whipper-in were following, and only two other gentlemen riders were before me. Zounds, sir! I presently recognised the hindmost as young Tilbury."

Captain Calverley warmly expressed his satisfaction.

"I instantly gave chase; and as Brother to Highflyer was quite fresh, the distance between him and Tippoo gradually diminished. As I was coming up hand over hand, Tippoo's rider turned his head round. By George, sir, nothing could exceed his astonishment when he beheld me. He was approaching a gate, and seemed suddenly to lose his head, for he checked Tippoo when taking the spring. The consequence was, the top bar was broken off, Tippoo's knees badly cut, and his rider thrown.

"‘The price of that horse is five hundred guineas, Mr. Tilbury,’ I said to him quietly, as he was picking himself up; ‘my steward shall call on you for the amount.’

"Without waiting to observe his discomfiture,



I hurried forward, and in a few minutes had the satisfaction of passing Lord Vernon just as his horse had fallen dead-lame. A little later the hounds ran into their fox, and I brought his brush home to add to the numerous trophies of the same kind that adorn the walls of my dining-room."

Captain Calverley had listened to the old sportsman's narrative with quite as much interest as he had given to many a similar tale years before, when his enthusiasm for his favourite pursuit had won his favour.

How natural seemed the graphic picture once more presented to him! How genial sounded the mellow voice that had so often made the great dining-hall at Delamere Court ring with its "Hark forward, hark forward, tantivy!" its "Tally-ho!" and many another jovial refrain indissolubly connected with British field-sports and good-fellowship! And how familiar seemed the emphatic expletives in which the narrator brought attention to the more impressive facts of his story—a habit

which was carried to a much greater extent by his fox-hunting contemporaries.

And now here was honest Jack Scudamore, the pride of the most sporting county in England, the master of the best pack of fox-hounds in the three kingdoms, so far out of his element as to be playing host in a small dining-room in May Fair, instead of being surrounded by a noisy throng of brother sportsmen, devoting his stirring recitals to the entertainment of two London idlers—a class of bipeds he had always most heartily despised.

The cause of this change of scene was partly due to the necessity of having a London establishment, for the purpose of seeing his heiress properly introduced to the great world. So after an absence from the modern Babylon of nearly a quarter of a century, the reckless roysterer of a former generation returned to his old haunts, steadied by the anxieties of a parent. There was another reason for his transferring his home to London.

Though Jack Scudamore could no longer lead his brother fox-hunters in the field, they discovered

that he could represent them in Parliament; and before he could make up his mind to check the tide of popularity the idea had set in motion, it made him one of the members for the county. As he had always been an ardent politician, the honour was by no means disagreeable to him; but he did not find it easy to reconcile himself to the charge it entailed.

"It's a hard thing, Captain," he said to his guest confidentially, "to have to give up the saddle; but the fact is, no horse can be found master of my weight, at any rate to take me to hounds. But to give up the hunting-field and all my old Cheshire friends and neighbours; to be tied to a petticoat in this horrible smoky place; to find oneself, as it were, just as closely tied to a minister; moreover, to have to attend wearisome debates in the stifling atmosphere of the House of Commons—zounds, sir! I wish myself back at Delamere Court fifty times a day!"

"But every one must make some sacrifice in the course of his life, uncle," observed his kinsman.

"Ah, that's all very well, my boy," replied the old sportsman; "that is, it's all very well for London idlers. They haven't got much to sacrifice, I'm thinking, for I know the sort of life they lead; but when you come to hear that the foxes in your covers were never so plentiful nor so stanch, it's hard, on a fine hunting-day, to be moped in a carriage in these dreadful narrow streets, or at night stuck in a doorway, in a mob of dolls and monkeys that pass for people of fashion nowadays."

"Well, you need not go to the ball, uncle, to-night," said Lord Fitzmaurice, joining in the laugh the old sportsman's unfavourable idea of London idling had excited; "the Captain and myself will be quite sufficient escort for the girls."

"Glad to hear it, my boy," he replied; "you may take charge of them and welcome. If you should see Porchester, don't forget to tell him I'm in town."

It was far from the first time that Captain Calverley had heard the name of that very dis-

tinguished member of the Government, but it made no impression on his mind. He had no idea of the powerful influence it was destined to exert over his career.

“Why don’t *you* get into Parliament, Captain?” inquired his host. “I’ve gained the M.P. affix,” he added, “and desire to see some of my friends with the same distinction; though between you and I and the post, I begin to feel very like an old hound driven along with a certain ornament dangling against his heels, that besides being any thing but an addition to his comfort, brings on him more public notice than he is in the humour to enjoy.”

He laughed the cheery laugh so familiar to the Delamere Hunt, and both his hearers joined in his mirth.

“I’ve heard a good deal about you from some of your well-wishers,” he added, still addressing him; “and, knowing something of you myself, I can’t help thinking that you’re much better suited for parliamentary life than I am—a precious

sight better, I should say. You have only to say the word, Captain, and I'll speak to Porchester; and between us, by George, sir, you shall be in St. Stephen's in a week."

Captain Calverley had hardly time to express his acknowledgments, when a message was brought in that the ladies were waiting; and, having finished their coffee and shaken hands with their cordial host, he and Lord Fitzmaurice proceeded to the drawing-room, where they found Geraldine and Fanny Scudamore, their attractions set off and increased by the most careful of full-dress toilettes.

As they were late, even for the Duke of Porchester's fashionable entertainments, little was said by either till after they had entered the carriage, and then the conversation was of that mildly-entertaining type that will not bear repetition—innocuous nothings apparently kept always in readiness for use in certain social contingencies.

Captain Calverley, though a model of gallantry, could not have been particularly com-

municative just then, for his thoughts were tinged with an interest that he felt bound to conceal. He had heard of the Duke of Porchester's admiration of his comrade's beautiful sister, and had reason to believe that his grace had thrown open his magnificent mansion much more with the idea of gratifying her than of pleasing his numerous guests. So he handed her into the vehicle that took them to Cavendish Square, and, when they there arrived, beheld her ascend the grand staircase with her cousin, to join the Duke's sister, the Marchioness of Fulbroke, who had helped him in doing the honours of his town-house since the decease of the last Duchess, with a confusion of feelings he would have found it impossible to describe.

To most sensible people arrived at a certain age, a ball must appear a commonplace affair; to the thorough utilitarian, a ballroom will present any thing rather than an instructive spectacle; but Captain Calverley did not consider himself too old, nor was he too sensible, to despise

the attractions that met his gaze as he entered the well-decorated, well-filled suite of apartments in Porchester House, in which had assembled all that was most worthy of admiration and honour in English society. The scene was as brilliant as Almack's,—the company quite as select; indeed, preoccupied though his mind was, he could not help regarding the tableau as singularly bright.

Lord Fitzmaurice drew on himself a good deal of attention: whether for his fair youthful face, his coronet, or his empty sleeve, cannot be stated; all that is known for certain is that he was generally observed by the female moiety of that brilliant assemblage. Many a faultless figure bent slightly forward as he passed, and many a radiant pair of eyes glanced with eager interest over the owner's ivory fan. In most instances I am willing to believe that it was merely an allowable form of hero-worship; in some, such demonstrations may have been caused by other motives, which regarded



rather the future husband than the present hero.

If such views were entertained, they certainly were not shared by their object. He looked much in the humour of the philosophic Prince of Denmark, when, as he affirmed, man contented not him, nor woman either. He was aware that his cousin, whom he had long admired, did not favour his suit. His clear complexion was tinged with a settled melancholy, that only gave way to a more cheerful expression when he recognised any one of the lovely faces that were smiling upon him, or returned the friendly greeting with which he was accosted by a brother officer.

Now and then he would linger a moment in the midst of a favoured group, freely exchanging the ordinary badinage; then glide away, perfectly regardless of the fluttering hearts that wished so very much to detain him in their neighbourhood. Presently he led his comrade towards the Marchioness of Fulbroke, to whom the Captain was not entirely unknown, and he had no

reason to be dissatisfied with his reception. A very stately matron was the Marchioness, and she evidently felt the full weight of the family dignity.

The Duke was at a little distance, with rather an ostentatious gallantry conversing with the beautiful cousins. In his official dress he appeared an elegant man, certainly; but was as much below the medium height as he was above the medium age. His grace had been a widower at least a year; but, though he had buried three wives, it was said that he was again a candidate for matrimony. The rumour perhaps accounted for the large assemblage of ladies among the Duke's guests.

He received Arthur Calverley with the courtesy with which long habit had made him familiar, and then resumed his conversation with the ladies. Arthur could not see that he paid Geraldine more attention than he paid her cousin; but it was quite evident that he would not allow either to consider herself neglected in his presence.

Captain Calverley was hurried away by Lord Fitzmaurice to the other end of the room, to be introduced to an old friend ; and before he could get away, the Duke had opened the ball with Geraldine, and the heiress had found a partner in his brother-in-law and colleague, the Marquis of Fulbroke, whose portly person and large face he had the satisfaction of observing going through the figure of a quadrille with as solemn a decorum as though he were listening to an ultimatum, or drawing up a protocol.

Lord Fitzmaurice joined the set, but evidently took his partner at random. Arthur did not assist in that dance, nor in the next, in which the Duke and his brother-in-law exchanged partners, absolutely preferring a conversation with the stately Marchioness and a select circle of magnificent matrons, into which he had been drawn ; but when he found that both the cabinet-ministers had led their partners to their seats, with no intention of renewing their performances—indeed, had withdrawn to a little distance to hear some informa-

tion, apparently of more than ordinary political interest, from one of the foreign ambassadors—he seized the opportunity to approach the younger of the fair cousins. Without a word she arose, and, placing her arm in his, allowed him to lead her back to the dancers.

Never had Geraldine appeared more beautiful than when, with a smile and blush that seemed to rival each other in the modest grace they gave her pure nun-like face, she evinced her pleasure at his presence, and floated lightly along in her tasteful ball-dress, with an exquisite wreath of pale roses in her hair. As she stood by his side, he could not help indulging in a long retrospect to compare her with the prim, precise, half-pleased, half-frightened child, who had ventured to look for a moment her gratitude to her preserver, even in the presence of the rigid yet picturesque old grand-mamma, whom she loved quite as much as she feared.

The handsome Captain liked to think of her thus. I do not know what the charm was; but

the quaint elements of that singular picture of the past, in which she was so charming a figure, constantly recurred to him.

Notwithstanding the spontaneous act of confidence she had just exhibited, Arthur could not help noticing an evident reticence in her manner, a restraint that almost amounted to reluctance, as if she were under the influence of some latent apprehension that maintained subjection over her natural feelings. Could this be caused, he thought, by her knowledge that her marriage with the Duke of Porchester was arranged, and because she knew that she was about to indulge in a social pleasure that must be the finale of what she probably had considered an agreeable intercourse?

As he looked down upon her bright young face, he regretted that her fate should bring her such overwhelming dignity as must belong to the fourth mistress of that stately Porchester House. But what could he do? She deserved a brilliant destiny, and this it was not in his power to offer. Though he felt the inappreciable value of what

was passing to another, in that spirit of true devotion which admits not of a particle of selfishness, he endeavoured to reconcile himself to her loss.

At such a time, and under such impressions, it was scarcely possible for him to avoid betraying a peculiar interest in his attentions to so charming a partner. Her beauty was of so peculiarly feminine a type; its expression was so pure, so noble, and so true; and brought, as he was, for the first time with her in that apparent confidential intimacy which the dance sanctions, how could he help experiencing an intense appreciation of the prize that mocked him by its easiness of approach?

As if Geraldine understood the feeling she had inspired, she seemed to relax in her restraint after the dance had commenced. Her glance became kinder; her voice, in the few words that they occasionally exchanged, seemed unusually soft and thrilling; and more than once she answered his remarks with a smile that lingered on the lovely face like a sunset over an Italian landscape.

She gave him her hand, when the figure required it, with a winning grace that made resignation almost impossible; and she appeared to follow him with her mild tender eyes with a pathetic sweetness of expression that filled his heart with the divine pity it seemed to breathe.

Arthur glided about as in a dream, pursuing a spirit that led his footsteps and held his senses captive, strangely bewildered and confused, and only recalled to a sense of the actual world by some kind words she addressed to him in the pauses at the end of each dance.

Finally came the grand ronde, with her hand once more cheerfully placed in his; and again he repeated the figure, in which they continued to regard each other as though passing through an ordeal that brought burning ploughshares to the heart instead of to the feet.

The quadrille was over. As they walked away, her arm again resting on his, they seemed equally oppressed with their feelings. He felt overpowered with a languor that had crept over

his senses like an opiate. It was clear to him that he must accept the present delightful demonstration as a farewell,—a farewell like that recorded by Shenstone :

“ So sweetly she said her adieu,  
That I thought she had bade me return.”

While he was in this peculiar frame of mind, passing among the throng of joyous spirits in search of Lord Fitzmaurice, quite unexpectedly the Duke of Porchester presented himself, and, as he understood, claimed Geraldine's hand. She withdrew it from her partner's arm, and placed it in that of the Duke. They walked away. Arthur was immediately sensible of a reaction that made every nerve in his body tingle with suppressed feeling.

He soon afterwards met the Viscount and his cousin, chatting together in the highest spirits. Arthur joined with a kind of reckless enjoyment he had never before experienced in their light-hearted conversation. Presently Lord Fitzmaurice

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left them to speak to a schoolfellow he discerned passing out of the room. In her also he observed an unusual reserve. Her manner was totally different to that which had rendered her beauty so alluring when they sung together that dangerous *liebeslied*.

“Ah!” thought the gallant cavalry-officer, “she has not forgiven my audacity. But how the deuce could I have helped it!”

He strove earnestly to amuse her. His sallies were favourably received. Presently she had recovered her customary liveliness. To those around they must have appeared the happiest couple present.

A waltz was commenced by the orchestra; and finding her disengaged, the gallant Captain the next minute was whirling with her round the room.

She entered into the spirit of the dance with such thorough abandonment, and with so exquisite a grace, that it was impossible for her gra-

tified partner to conceal his enjoyment. The heiress, with her Juno-like figure and dazzling beauty, clinging to him with eyes fixed on his, radiant with pleasure, might have turned a cooler head.

The pleasure Arthur had experienced led to no imprudence on his part beyond a too-evident satisfaction in the graceful exercise to which he had surrendered himself; nor was there any thing more blamable in the conduct of his attractive partner; but when the waltz ended, the conviction was forced upon him that he had unwittingly committed some grave offence.

Prominent among the lookers-on he observed Lord Fitzmaurice and his sister standing together at a little distance from the dancers. They had evidently been watching the waltzers. The face of the first was clouded with a gloom that gave an angry expression to his pale, almost boyish, countenance his comrade had never seen there before. The features of the other were inexpressibly sad. Both turned away as the music

ceased, and he saw them no more that evening.

As he was leading Miss Scudamore out of the dancing-room, he was again encountered by the blue ribbon and white head of his host, who seemed fated on this night to mar all this young soldier's pleasures; for, having stated that the Marchioness had sent him for her, Arthur had no alternative but to resign his partner, as he had before resigned her cousin.

He met some friends shortly afterwards, in whose society he remained dancing and conversing till an opportunity offered for rejoining his own party. He then found that the cousins had been escorted to the supper-room by the two gallant statesmen, and there surrounded by the most distinguished of the Duke's guests, were unapproachable. He could not see Lord Fitzmaurice.

Shortly afterwards, in any thing but a pleasant state of mind, Arthur left Porchester House, with the intention of calling on his fox-hunting friend in the morning, to see if any thing could

be made of his proffered assistance to get him into Parliament; for he felt that he wanted something of the exciting nature of a contested election to divert his attention from unprofitable speculations and regrets.

## CHAPTER IV.

### ST. HILDEBRAND.

It was a great day for the parish of Delamere Parva. It was the anniversary of the birth of that sainted hermit, who, under the auspices of its zealous Vicar, had given a name to the new church, and a life of equal local fame to the religious library. It was "the Feast of St. Hildebrand."

St. Hildebrand's bells were ringing a merry peal, to the great gratification of the pious-minded of the congregation, who lived furthest from the belfry—to the intense annoyance of others, "the weaker brethren," whose dwellings were close to it—particularly of Jacob Cobb, a retired maltster, whose neat brick-house, covered with monthly

roses the best part of the year, was immediately underneath.

Jacob Cobb hated their clang; but though he was an influential man in the neighbourhood, he found himself powerless to stop it. When his daughter lay ill of brain-fever, soon after these noisy additions to the new structure had been hung, his complaint merely elicited a suggestion to put cotton in the patient's ears—which did not make him more tolerant of the nuisance.

But what could Jacob Cobb expect? Was he not "that pig of a churchwarden," whose representations to the Bishop had put a check upon certain novelties in the ornamentation of the new church which the zealous Vicar had intended to introduce; and was he not known to be the writer of the letters in the *Delamere Guardian*, that had accused him of popish practices? So the ringers were encouraged to show their skill on all saints'-days and holidays, on every Lord's-day, besides assembling for practice twice or thrice a-week.

Of course, it being the feast of the hermit, his bells had been ringing from an early hour, going through their most approved evolutions,—grandsires, triple-bob-majors, and other grand achievements in the art,—in a style that ought to have driven the pig of a churchwarden either stone-deaf or raving mad.

Suddenly the jubilant peal ceased: two or three now struck up a more religious round; they were ringing for church. The familiar summons to morning service had scarcely commenced, when, from a low quaint stone structure near the sacred edifice, a procession of boys moved out in their Sunday suits, while from the other wing issued a similar number of girls in an equally neat uniform. They were marshalled by their teachers; and, prayer-book in hand, slowly filed into the church by a side-entrance.

From the centre of the same building now issued a few old men and women, coarsely but neatly clothed, who slowly made their way to the same door. They were followed by other

poor parishioners, who received coals, blankets, soup; bread, and physic—on condition of regular attendance at every service. They therefore found it to their interests to be the most punctual portion of the congregation.

Lastly came the rate-payers, who represented the parish, with their families, a very large majority being females. The zealous Vicar had accomplished a great deal. He had obtained extraordinary influence over the ladies of Delamere Parva. No preacher in the county possessed so many worked slippers, embroidered book-markers, or illuminated inscriptions. He was uncommonly well off in church-furniture where ornate needlework was required, and had abundant assistance in the choir, in the school, and in the infirmary. Old ladies and young ladies vied with each other in making themselves useful to the reverend gentleman, as well as in wearing the largest set of jet-beads and the most conspicuous crosses.

Ill-natured people attributed this to the bachelorship of the Vicar; but probably it had more to do



with the lack of amusement in the neighbourhood. Husbands and brothers were constantly employed in agricultural or sporting occupations; and if they went to church on a Sunday, seemed under the impression that this duty sufficed for the week. The wives and sisters took quite a different view of their religious obligations.

It was astonishing to mark the diffusion of architectural taste, as displayed by some even of the youngest members of this fair flock, as they approached the most noticeable features in the new church. Every young lady, fresh from boarding-school, seemed to have an enthusiastic appreciation for the grim heads that poked out from the strangest pillories.

It appeared as if, on this important occasion, some influence had been exercised by them on the young gentlemen of their acquaintance; for few of them were to be seen without such a companion. The farmers' and the tradesmen's daughters came in toilettes that might have sufficed for peeresses in their own right, redolent of fashion-

able perfumery ; and the gentlewomen by birth in dresses that were only distinguishable from the others by being less pretentious and better made.

Each belle, however, had made it a point to come with her beau, every one in his smartest tie and his best hat, his newest gloves on his hands, and his whitest pocket-handkerchief peeping out of his breast-coat pocket. It must not be supposed that the young ladies of Little Delamere took advantage of this association, for flirting. Even the most rustic of them knew better than to do that.

They were fully aware that it was not exactly Sunday ; but then dear Mr. Plynymmon had assured them that the Feast of St. Hildebrand was to be kept as the very holiest of institutions. He was the special saint of Little Delamere, the particular patron of its church ; therefore all Anglo-Catholics in the parish, all real Christians in fact, were bound to keep his anniversary in especial honour.

On this account it was that the three Misses Thornicroft, and the two Misses Bolsover, and the

one Miss Hawthorn, with the other interesting feminine broods then representing the young ladyhood of that favoured district, had appropriated the most respectable-looking of the young men of the district, including Fred Styles, the surgeon's apprentice, and Harry Bradshaw, the attorney's articled clerk, and seemed intent on nothing so much as making them acquainted with the most interesting miracles that had been performed by their sainted hermit, as related in the charming little volume written by their beloved pastor.

So group after group, and couple after couple, were seen to proceed in the same direction, talking and listening with equal earnestness, till they disappeared through the antique-looking porch at the front entrance.

Unquestionably there were some of the approaching congregation who were neither young ladies nor young gentlemen. In the first place, there were matrons who had turned their backs on their youth for an uncertain number of decades ;

mothers of families, aware of their serious responsibilities, widows, wives, and spinsters, who had come to the conclusion that their spiritual obligations overruled their social ones. Nevertheless, very few of them were found superior to the claims of fashion,—from Mrs. Protheroe in a sky-blue moiré-antique and Cashmere shawl, to Miss Euphemia Proudfoot in her delicate green silk and lace jacket,—they all looked as if they had studied the illustrations of “*Les Modes de Paris*,” quite as much as “*The Life and Times of St. Hildebrand*.”

In the next place, but only here and there one, there were fathers of families, or seniors of the male community, who were led either by curiosity or interest to attend that particular service. Prominent among them was a respectable-looking elderly man of florid complexion, wearing a white hat that did not quite conceal his iron-gray hair, a dark cloth shooting-jacket with large pockets, buttoned upon a velvet waistcoat, and brown kerseymeré trowsers, over the lower portion of which

a pair of high Wellington boots had been drawn. He carried his gloves in one hand, and a thick walking-stick in the other. His limbs, however, if bulk could be taken as a sign of strength, scarcely needed such support. Yet he rested on his stick as he took what seemed a critical survey of the new building; certainly not with an air of enthusiasm; indeed as his eyes rested upon the heads introduced at the termination of the arches, unquestionably he wore an irreverent look.

“What the dickins could a chap want thrusting his ugly head among them stones?” he mentally inquired. “If the rest o’ his body were inside, I could come pretty nigh to understand it; because he might have been a leaning out when that arch sunk; but there be nothin’ left on him, but his big shaven crown, inside or out; and he looks as though he didn’t care twopence what’s come of his limbs! Well, if this be to show us what was done in them medi-evil times—precious evil them times must have been, I’m thinking.”

As an excuse for this verbal blunder, I must

inform the reader that the speaker was a pig! At least he had long been so in the consideration of the Rev. Basil Plynymmon. That stout ruddy comfortable-looking person was the churchwarden of Delamere Parva—a thorn in the side of the zealous Vicar, for he not only very stupidly and ignorantly had opposed several of his Anglo-Catholic improvements, but had influenced many of the oldest and most respectable of the parishioners to adopt his piggish views.

Whilst Jacob Cobb was thus absurdly speculating on the origin of an architectural ornament, he was not aware that a stranger was approaching him.

“A very handsome church this, for so small a parish,” the latter observed.

The churchwarden turned, and beheld a gentlemanly-looking man of middle age, with a large cleanly shaved face, and projecting bushy black eye-brows, though his hair was nearly white. He had a very grave expression of countenance, and his complexion was that of a man used to late

hours and hard study. He was dressed in black, with long black overcoat.

The churchwarden took off his hat, for though he was a pig, he had more than a pig's notion of courtesy and good breeding. As he glanced over the stranger, he came to the conclusion that he was the Wesleyan minister, for whom the new chapel was being built at the other end of the village. For reasons of his own, though he had always hated Dissenters, he determined to be friendly; especially when the stranger returned his courtesy, by raising his hat, with a good natured smile, that contrasted favourably in the eyes of the churchwarden with the stern superciliousness of his Vicar, when meeting him.

"Why, yes, sir, it be handsome, I daresay," Mr. Cobb replied; with, however, rather a doubtful look at the building. "Wonderful fine for so small a place as Little Delamere; but the old church where my family worshipped for generations, were a thousand times more agreeable to me to look on."

“No doubt, no doubt; a very proper feeling, Mr. Cobb,” was the reply, in a kind tone.

“When I think of the time when my dear mother used to lead me by the hand into the old pew,” continued the churchwarden, “and found out the places for me in the prayer-book, and know that the familiar objects on which she used to gaze with so profound a veneration are entirely gone, while all kinds of queer gimcracks are put in their places, to tell you the plain truth, sir, I can’t admire it nohow.”

“Nothing more natural, Mr. Cobb,” said the other, with the same kindly look and manner, evidently not in the slightest degree surprised that a pig should have feelings so like a Christian. “But all things in this lower world are subject to change, as no doubt you are well aware, Mr. Cobb. A building, however endeared to us by the recollections of childhood, cannot be made to last for ever. Heaven alone is eternal.”

The churchwarden felt a conviction, earnest churchman though he was, that if his new ac-



quaintance preached as impressively as he talked, the little chapel would soon have a full congregation.

"But let us go in, Mr. Cobb," was added, in a tone almost of entreaty; "I have come expressly to have the privilege of joining in your service."

The churchwarden was too good a churchman to hesitate about complying with such a request, so he at once led the way into the quaintly-ornamented porch. Both took off their hats, and reverently entered the building. The entire congregation appeared to be assembled in two divisions,—the women on one side, the men on the other,—seated on low benches, with a broad opening in the centre.

The churchwarden led the way to a back seat, where his new acquaintance placed himself in a dark corner, behind one of the fantastic projections with which the building was ornamented. Simultaneously both seemed to repeat a short prayer, and then sat down.

Mr. Cobb was not surprised at the apparent curiosity of his companion. No doubt, to a Dissenter, the accumulation of Popish ornaments must be strange indeed. In the stained glass, in the stone carvings, in the reading-desk, in the pulpit, in the screen, in the chancel,—in truth, in a score of other places, there were symbols and objects only to be found, he believed, in Roman Catholic places of worship.

Then, instead of the modest communion-table, such as satisfied the religious feelings of the followers of the earnest, but simple-minded Wesley, there was an altar covered with a richly-embroidered cloth, a large cross, a pair of tall gilt candlesticks with great wax candles, and a profusion of flowers and tapers.

Above was an altarpiece by a famous pre-Raphaelite, representing the hermit at his devotions, clothed in a monk's gown and hood, and looking dreadfully gaunt and cadaverous. A robin was singing at the opening of the cave, whose plumage was regarded as a masterpiece of art;

but other enthusiasts gave higher praise to the exquisite finish of the saint's toenails.

The frame was covered with an inscription in red letters ; but as they were in a Gothic character, the churchwarden had never been able to decipher them. Round it was a kind of triumphal arch of flowers and evergreens, similar decorations ornamenting the doors of the chancel, the windows, and all the church furniture. This was, of course, in honour of St. Hildebrand, and had been done by those amiable young ladies who were most zealous in the service of the zealous Vicar.

Scarcely had the stranger taken a careful survey of these novelties when the organ began to sound, and from the front door entered a procession of choristers, acolytes, and clergymen. The congregation stood up while their minister and his assistants passed between the two divisions, singing with much apparent fervour. The majority were in surplices ; but there were others wearing vestments of a peculiarly rich fabric, and one or two bore banners of silk painted and embroid-

ered. They marched into the chancel, where they finished their hymn; the banners were suspended on each side of the altar; and choir and priests having taken their respective places, the morning service commenced.

From time to time the churchwarden turned to watch the effect of certain portions of the ritual on his dissenting acquaintance: the intoning of the curate,—a special abomination in his ears; the acolytes in their smart robes, swaying their censers to and fro; the gaudy vestments of the Vicar, and his extraordinary gesticulations before the altar;—but the solemn, thoughtful face gave no sign either of impatience or displeasure. There was an earnest scrutiny beneath those overhanging brows—that was all.

Perhaps the Wesleyan minister, he thought, did not like to exhibit any hostile feeling against a brother clergyman in his own church. He was certainly very attentive to what was going on; even joined in the responses as heartily as himself. Altogether his conduct was extremely liberal for

a Dissenter; especially when the offertory was being collected, for he absolutely dropped a piece of gold into the bag.

At the conclusion of the anthem the Vicar entered the pulpit. This was always a trying time for the churchwarden. Not only because the reverend gentleman would preach in his surplice instead of his gown, as his predecessors had done as far back as he could remember, but the new pulpit was a low, curious-looking thing, totally unlike the old one, and, as the preacher stood up, unavoidably suggested the irreverend simile of a jack-in-the-box.

But the stranger was sitting, regarding the Vicar with the same thoughtful, penetrating gaze he had maintained throughout; if any thing, the look was more thoughtful and searching than before.

"Ah!" said Jacob Cobb to himself, "he wants to be able to judge what sort of a sermon the Vicar can preach. Them Wesleyan ministers, I've heard, are often powerful in that line.

I doubt, though, he'll hear much that he'll care to remember."

The Reverend Basil Plynymmon gave out his text to an extremely attentive congregation, of which the stranger certainly formed one. What followed was merely a discourse on the merits of the Saint whom they had assembled to honour, especially dilating on his devotion and self-denial. This led into a panegyric on the superiority of the Anglo-Catholic era; the preacher dwelling on the advantages of adopting a Christianity after that pure and unselfish pattern, in preference to what he stigmatised as the latitudinarianism which disgraced the bulk of professing Christians of what was called the Church of England.

He referred with mingled acrimony and humour to the present state of Protestantism, and was particularly sarcastic on the divisions of the Reformed Church, of which he ventured to call himself an unworthy member; then he dilated on the efforts that had for some time been made by a chosen band of its ministers to effect a change

in the practice and ritual of the Church, as it existed in England, in the truly religious times of the blessed St. Hildebrand. Intense commendation was bestowed upon Dr. Pusey, and the names of Wilberforce, Manning, and Newman were mentioned as deserving especial honour.

The preacher, after entering upon a somewhat exaggerated statement of his own labours to maintain what he was pleased to call the integrity of the rubric, commenced a highly-coloured narrative of the advantages he had been able to confer upon the parish. He laid great stress upon the beauty of the new church, the excellence of the bells, greater stress upon the attractiveness of the service; then, with a slight and pitying reference to certain of "the weaker brethren" who had become needlessly alarmed by witnessing such improvements, he dwelt with fervour upon the help he had received from his affectionate congregation, specially eulogising their liberal contributions to the offertory and other funds set aside for church purposes.

Lastly, he appealed to them in still stronger language, for increased contributions to enable him to carry out his views for a perfect restoration of the true Anglo-Catholic Church, hinting mysteriously at the advent of more marvellous changes that should make all the faithful believe in a restoration of the blessings which had so wonderfully distinguished the God-loving era of the blessed St. Hildebrand.

From his dark corner the sharp glance of the churchwarden's new acquaintance maintained for some minutes a pretty close scrutiny of the preacher; but whether it was that the countenance or the figure in the low pulpit did not offer any thing worth longer contemplation, or that what he heard had as little interest for him as what he saw, he presently turned his bushy eyebrows towards the occupants of the benches.

He took the female side first, and could not help noticing the assumption of absorbed attention which marked that part of the congregation; indeed, the air of ecstatic admiration impressed upon



the countenances of some of the younger ladies as they listened to platitude after platitude of the discourse, absolutely provoked a smile on the stern physiognomy of the observer.

He glanced to the other side. The young gentlemen might be less ecstatic, but their demeanour was highly creditable. Only a few suffered their eyes to stray in the direction of their companions in their walk to church. Here and there might be observed a face with an expression of weariness or dissatisfaction ; but it is more than probable that the owner was not quite so powerfully influenced, either by female attractions or by Puseyite experiments, as his neighbours.

The churchwarden and the stranger, being the nearest the door, were the first out of church ; the latter leading the way down a lane that led into the high-road at a brisk pace, as if he did not care to wait either for the congregation or the preacher. The expression of his countenance was rather more severe in its seriousness than before.

“ Well sir, that beant the sort o’ sermon *you’d*

preach, I'd bet a sixpence," exclaimed the other heartily.

"You're right, Mr. Cobb," was the reply.

"Thought as much. Now I promise you this, though I be the churchwarden of Delamere Parva, when you opens that little chapel t'other end o' the village, I'll be among the first to go and hear you."

"What chapel, Mr. Cobb?" inquired the stranger, turning round and looking him full in the face.

"Why, the Wesleyan Chapel, to be sure."

At this instant they came into the turnpike-road ; and the first object that attracted the churchwarden's attention was a travelling chariot-and-four standing near the foot-path, the postilions in purple livery, and a mitre on the panels. As his companion approached, the former touched their caps. Jacob Cobb was both amazed and confused, and betrayed his embarrassment in his countenance.

"Mr. Cobb," said the stranger gravely, as he

laid hold of the silver handle of the door. "I received your letter."

"Yes, my lord," said the churchwarden, hastily doffing his hat.

"And I came here expressly to have an opportunity of ascertaining the grounds of your complaint."

"Yes, my lord."

"I shall cause a communication to be made to the Rev. Basil Plynymmon which may probably have a wholesome effect; but I do not see any cause for my more direct interference with your Vicar at present. Good-day, Mr. Cobb."

"Good-day, my lord."

The churchwarden bowed low as the Right Reverend Father in God, the Bishop of the diocese, stepped into his carriage. The next minute the door closed and the horses started off, as the congregation began to approach.

Jacob Cobb had made an astounding blunder. He had mistaken the wealthiest and most orthodox of the prelates of the Church of England for an ob-

scure Dissenter. Could any thing be more stupid ?  
But what else could be expected from a pig ?

The Feast of St. Hildebrand was over. There had been a private meeting in the vestry, where the zealous Vicar, in a sublime state of amiability, received his fair supporters and their contributions. It was quite a levée, indeed a very crowded one ; and if the smart dresses and radiant looks of the more enthusiastic devotees were lost upon the Reverend Basil Plynymmon, their pecuniary offerings were not. Deeply touching were the thanks they elicited, as the very thin and rather hard-worked curate wrote them down in a book for publication, taking special care to inquire in what fund they were to be placed ; for there were at least half-a-dozen : one for enlarging the church, another for St. Hildebrand's College, a third for the Sunday schools, a fourth for the religious and sick poor, a fifth for the St. Hildebrand Mission to the Heathen, and a sixth for augmenting the Vicar's insufficient stipend.

The wealthier ladies of the neighbourhood contributed liberally to all these funds; the others taxed their resources to the utmost, they were so proud to see their names in the little printed books which the Vicar periodically circulated to stimulate the liberality of his parishioners; and the young ladies whose means were limited not only gave up their little pocket-money, but practised a most rigid self-denial to have the power of helping in the good work. The poorest had her reward. Pretty little Alice Hawthorn, when she surrendered the treasured half-crown her grandmother had given her on her birthday, revelled in the gushing conviction that dear Mr. Plynymmon cared more for it than he did for the cheque which that odious upstart old frump the rich widow of Admiral Proudfoot had so ostentatiously placed in his hands.

Very tender was the address which he delivered to all and sundry of his fair friends at the termination of these impressive proceedings. In the middle of it, he shook out the very softest

cambric handkerchief, and wiped his eyes (when he had had much to be thankful for, he always shed tears). The tender-hearted spectators considered this portion of the beautiful ceremony worth more than all they had paid for it, and were sure to weep in sympathy. Moreover, when they dispersed, every one went away with the pleasant assurance that she had been specially referred to in those "exquisitely grateful, and sweetly beautiful sentences."

The procession of the school-children was over, with their banners and crosses, as well as their tea-party, with the young lady-teachers assisting in the distribution of seed-cake and weak bohea; this concluded with another address from their reverend patron and director, which was quite as effective as that delivered in the morning. And every one of the delighted amateur governesses went away, perfectly satisfied that in the parting shake of the hand with which she had been favoured, there was a tender pressure that marked peculiar regard.

The dinner at the vicarage was over, in which

the Reverend Basil Plynymmon, with the best assistance of the still active Mrs. Martha, entertained his clerical assistants, some of whom had come a considerable distance to share in the labours of the day, and fully realised Mrs. Martha's estimate of the clerical appetite ; and all the guests had departed except one, who sat in the dining-room, now styled "the refectory," at a long table covered with empty glasses and decanters, close to, and apparently in confidential communication with his host.

Although time had somewhat thinned the stranger's flowing hair, especially at the crown of his head, and slightly marked him with his iron hand, particularly with a certain stoop in the shoulders, he was unquestionably the pedestrian with his knapsack who had so materially changed the direction of his college friend's career, as described in an early chapter of this faithful history. Apparently, too, his pedestrian powers were unimpaired, though they had lately been exercised in more ambitious journeys. He was an Alpine tra-

veller ; he had ascended Mont Blanc ; he was frequently in Italy : his last journey was from Rome.

Mr. Trimmer looked considerably darker in complexion ; his glance, too, had more that ever that peculiar searching, mocking expression, it had worn when praising the would-be editor's declamatory powers ; but his general appearance was still thoroughly gentlemanlike.

" You have found this much better than editing Greek plays ; eh, Plynymmon ? " inquired his friend ; " to say nothing of having escaped a long printer's bill, and a continuous roasting from all the classical critics in the kingdom."

" Why, yes," replied the Vicar, complacently caressing his chin with one hand. " I doubt I should have got on so well with *Æschylus*."

" You see I was not a false prophet ; I knew where your capacity lay. I told you that you had only to take advantage of your opportunity."

" Yes, Mr. Trimmer, you did ; I am free to confess as much. But it demanded almost superhuman powers to succeed in such an undertaking."



His friend looked into his face and smiled.

"You seem to have played your part uncommonly well, especially with the women. That required tact, no doubt."

"Marvellous tact, Mr. Trimmer. You can have no idea of the difficulty of managing them."

"Oh!" cried the other, in a peculiar way, and with a peculiar look.

"The Duchess was a great loss," added the Vicar with a sigh. "The name of her grace was even of more value to me than her contributions, liberal though they were."

"I suppose so. But how about your strong-minded woman? Is she still a stumbling-block?"

"Dreadful. If it were not for the very handsome assistance afforded by her frequent cheques, I really should, I think, long since have given her up as incorrigible."

"You don't say so! But never despair, my dear friend. Rome, you know, wasn't built in a day! and the more difficult, the more honourable

the achievement. What has she done lately so very scandalous?"

The Vicar drew from the breast of his coat a pocket-book, which he opened; and from a number of letters addressed in a female hand, which Mr. Trimmer's searching glance fell upon with a singularly mischievous expression, he selected one; put back the bulging pocket-book, opened the letter he had selected, and handed it to his friend.

"Think of her audacity in writing to me in such a style. Read, Mr. Trimmer, read!"

That gentleman read as follows:

"I can't come to your feast; but enclose an order on my bankers for fifty pounds."

"That's not so bad a beginning, Plynymon?"

"Go on, Mr. Trimmer; go on," replied the Vicar hastily, and with rather a disturbed look. The reader continued.

"But you must not think from this that I care about hermits or saints either. I think them at best a lazy lot, who have shirked their proper

duties, and fled the temptations of the world, to get out of harm's way. I know nothing about your St. Hildebrand; but I'll bet you ten pounds to a crown he was a *humbug*!"

The Vicar groaned, with a decidedly indignant expression of countenance.

"Think of such a term applied to the only mediæval saint, born in Delamere Parva!"

Mr. Trimmer looked sympathisingly, but read on.

"The reason I cannot attend your religious demonstration is that Banbury Races occur on the same day. I *must* be in the ring, as I have two young horses to run; and I intend to back them both heavily. Now, I'll put you up to a *good thing*. 'TIPPETYWITCHET' IS SAFE TO WIN! You may lay a hat-full of money on him. Don't be afraid. He'll turn out a safer card than your precious St. Hildebrand, by an awful long chalk!"

The Vicar groaned again, and lifted up his eyes.

"Then there's 'Pot 8 o's.' The odds are seven

to four against him. Take them *in thousands*. You'll never have such another chance. Remember 'Pot 8 o's' for the handicap, and *lay it on thick*. Win all the tin you can by this hint; but be very particular to *keep it dark*. If you've betted on the favourite for the Cup, *hedge*. Take my word for it, he is uncommonly like your friend the Hermit—an out-and-out *screw*."

The Vicar groaned louder than before, and threw up his hands with a glance of virtuous horror.

"Very improper language indeed," observed Mr. Trimmer, though apparently under some constraint. "But let me finish."

"The girl I took at your recommendation, Patty Clark, has turned out *a brick*. She is now my trainer. Nancy Green is also clever in the stable. But I want you to find me a light-weight for a jockey. Pray look into your schools, and select me a likely-looking one, accustomed to horses. Mind, she mustn't *drink*, and I don't allow *swearing*. She must be rising ten, and

warranted sound. I want a girl quick, lively, up to every thing, down at nothing; faultless in temper; a fearless rider, and a feather-weight. Don't send me a *muff*! Please to look sharp about it. Remember, you may bet on 'Tip-petywitchet' whatever you like; and as regards 'Pot 8 o's,' take the odds to any amount. Now's your chance to make a precious sight better book than a certain Life and Times. Indeed, it's my humble opinion that your blessed saint, one of these odd days, will turn out a *regular sell*!

“Faithfully yours,

“LUCRETIA BRABAZON.

“P.S. I'll bet you five to four that you'll get pulled up by the Bishop before the end of the month.”

The Vicar burst out into a scornful laugh, as he took back the epistle, and carefully replaced it amongst what may be presumed to have been his parochial archives.

“A very extraordinary woman,” exclaimed

Mr. Trimmer ; “ I hope that she’s not a fair sample of your female parishioners.”

“ No, indeed !” replied his friend. “ There’s no one like her in my flock—or any where else—I think.”

“ By-the-way,” he presently added, with a kind of half-earnest, half-jocose expression in his features ; “ what do they say about me in Rome ?”

“ Hush !” said Mr. Trimmer ; and he rose from his seat, cautiously went to the door, opened it and listened ; then with increased gravity returned to his seat. “ Your people have gone to bed, I think.”

“ Long ago,” was the reply.

The Vicar regarded his companion with real earnestness, and the latter returned his gaze with a solemnity of aspect that heralded an important communication. Then ensued a conversation of so strictly secret a nature, that it would be a shameful betrayal of private confidence to repeat any portion of it. The reader, however, if disappointed by this very proper reserve on the part

of the author, is assured that the result of this highly-private and confidential conference will appear in the course of the narrative.

About an hour later, both retired to their respective chambers, each perfectly satisfied with the part he had played in the day's proceedings.

## CHAPTER V.

### GOLD IN THE CRUCIBLE.

FANNY and Geraldine knew that their union of feeling, that their endearing protection and dependence, that their long affection and entire trust, were at an end. The motherless girl who, by the influence of her seniority, had so fondly and truly acted as a mother by the younger orphan, had become her *rival*.

After encouraging and nurturing the child's gratitude to the preserver of her life, till the partiality grew into a girl's devotion, and the devotion had developed into the one passionate impulse of a woman's life, she had won from her the affection which her grateful heart had, year after year of dreamy hopes and delicious aspirations, so earnestly desired to gain. She had been awakened



from the exquisite dream of an innocently joyous life, into utter darkness !

It was not so much the sense of her desolation, or the bitterness of her disappointment which affected her so strongly, as the knowledge that she owed them both to one with whom she had enjoyed such perfect confidence for the best portion of her hitherto pleasant existence ; who had lived with her in the dearest and closest relationship, as mother, as sister, as cousin, as friend,—always indulgent, ever considerate,—from first to last profoundly interested in her happiness, and never for a moment suggesting the possibility of interference with the current of those bright thoughts which kept that felicity in perpetual verdure.

There was something in Fanny's letters to Geraldine, that had at first excited a feeling of uneasiness. She was not alarmed when informed of her being at Delamere Court with Arthur. No apprehensions were raised by her praises of the handsome captain. She delighted in such testimony in favour of the *beau ideal* of her girlish

imagination. She may have envied her cousin the privilege of being so much in his society, but loved her too trustfully to doubt her for a single instant.

It was the sudden cessation of these commendations that first disturbed the equilibrium of her thoughts. Arthur was still with Fanny ; nevertheless, there was scarcely any reference to him in her correspondence. The delightful tide of confidential gossip had ceased, and she received in its place, accounts of Lord Vernon, of Sir Harry, of Tom Holyoake ; notices of horses and dogs, with reports of the Duke's first appearance out of mourning, and of Lucretia Brabazon's growing intimacy with the Vicar, and affectionate reminiscences of "Cousin Potter."

Geraldine was at first perplexed by this unaccountable omission. Fanny must have been well aware how much she desired to hear every thing that could be told her about Arthur—that other people, however worthy of notice, were dwarfed into insignificance when he appeared amongst

and therefore bound to take advantage of his opportunities? And under such provocation, where do you find a young officer in a crack regiment in her Majesty's service doing otherwise?

He was perfectly conscious of the favourable impression he had created, and meant to follow up his advantage on their next meeting. It was the extraordinary dialogue he had overheard in the assembly-room, and the astounding recognition he had there made, that had produced the signs of distraction Geraldine had noticed. Her own subsequent reserve had caused him to restrain his natural inclination to render himself agreeable.

Of course my fair readers are unanimous in their condemnation of Fanny Scudamore. I have no doubt they consider her exceedingly forward, and in no slight degree treacherous. They would have acted so very differently themselves under such circumstances. They would never have sung dangerous *liebeslieder* when alone with so handsome and accomplished a cavalier. Of course

not. As for quietly suffering the audacious liberty he had dared to take, one and all would have looked him into stone, had his moustache—however great a love it might have been—approached within twelve legal inches of their lips.

Then her regard for her cousin—what had become of it?

Jack Scudamore's daughter, however, was not quite "the wretch" she may appear to the more perfect of her sex. Her excuse was, that for years previously she had been so deeply interested in Arthur Calverley, that when he became known to her as a perfect realisation of her most glowing ideas of the lover and the hero, and began to devote himself to her with a tenderness that could not be mistaken, heart, brain, and soul succumbed to the dangerous influence.

She thought of the absent Geraldine, and made resolutions "to listen not to the voice of the charmer, charmed he never so wisely." He charmed again, and her good resolutions were scattered to the winds.

Under the dreadful impression that she was about to part—perhaps for ever—with the object of her secret yet unrestrainable idolatry, Fanny had been made to sing that terribly dangerous love-song—every word of which, whether in German or English, for days and nights before, had been haunting her with greater temptation than ever troubled St. Anthony; every syllable and note had brought with it an insidious poison that made her conscience torpid, and her senses delirious. In singing “Am I not fondly thine own,” her heart felt as a flower expanding in the sunbeams; in receiving the stolen caress, as if nourished by the blessed dew of heaven.

Then came returning consciousness, and an agony of remorse, followed by stronger and better resolutions. She would not take from her darling Geraldine all the sunshine of her pure young life. She could not plunge that bright blameless soul into an eclipse she knew would become darker than the stormiest night. She could never be at once so false and cruel as to abuse

the confidence of that most trusting nature, and secretly win from her the one object of her guileless heart.

Then came a thousand sweet recollections of their common happiness when they worked, studied, strolled, or sat in a quiet corner and gossiped together; and the one loved theme was that youthful Bayard, who, they insisted, was more admirable than Crichton, and more heroic than Cœur-de-Lion, who, moreover, they determined was to become a greater commander than Alexander the Great.

Then Geraldine remembered that in all the Châteaux en Espagne, which the enamoured girl had built up in her golden future, she, her beloved Fanny, was always to be with her, still the dearest mamma in the world, the most loving of sisters, and the most faithful of friends. If Arthur were to raise himself to be the first person in the State (and he was to be that, at least), her darling cousin should be as great as herself; if he were to become a king, she should marry the very

handsomest prince in his dominions. Could she now have the heart to destroy these fairy illusions—the Fata Morgana of the dear child's sunny horizon—that affectionate, unselfish, true-hearted, most trusting of *confidantes*? she who had prided herself on being her faithful friend and loving counsellor, year after year of their joint-exploration of this dreamland of girlish love? No! she replied to these mental questionings; whatever it cost her, she would never be so base.

Just then the intention of her father's numerous friends to return him for the county was manifested. Fanny threw herself into the movement with all the impulsiveness of her disposition, and, conjointly with Lucretia Brabazon—who distinguished herself more than ever on this congenial occasion—entered heart and soul into the exciting contest. Its absorbing interest, and active employment, allowed her little opportunity for brooding over her feelings for Captain Calverley; nevertheless, once or twice in the solitude of her chamber, and the indulgence of her secret

thoughts, she could not help feeling a conviction that it was very hard to be obliged to surrender to another the only man she had ever loved.

Then came a flood of tender reminiscences, on which floated the passionate declarations that had been sung to her with a voice whose thrilling melody fell upon her ear to the exclusion of all consciousness of every other sound. Again and again recurred the assurance of that Evangelist of Love, as expressed in the German lyric,

“ So, so wie ich dich liebe,  
So, so liebe auch mich,  
Die, die zärtlichen Triebe  
Fuhl' ich ja ewig für dich !  
Ja ! ja ! fuhl' ich ja ewig für dich ! ”

Again and again was repeated that gospel of passion, as declared in the English paraphrase :

“ Then, then, e'en as *I* love thee,  
Say, say wilt *thou* love me ?  
Thoughts, thoughts tender and true, love,  
Say wilt thou cherish you me ?  
*Yes ! yes ! am I not fondly thine own ? ”*

Poor Fanny ! with such words in her memory,



in her heart, in her soul, the struggle was indeed very hard.

Father and daughter went to town; and in the joy of her first meeting with Geraldine after the longest separation they had had, Fanny forgot herself and her own feelings. Perhaps it was the sense of their real estrangement that induced her to be more than ever affectionate to her cousin. Certain it is that the doubts and misgivings of the latter were chased away by a return of the tenderness and confidence which had made her young life a moral Arcadia.

They met Arthur at the dinner that preceded the ball, and as he was equally attentive to them, and equally delighted to see them, the unselfish Geraldine was quite content. Fanny contrived to appear content also; in truth she put considerable restraint upon herself, in his presence, and looked at him as little as possible.

She behaved admirably up to the moment that he led her to join in the waltz. When those lustrous eyes dwelt upon her again, as the handsome

face closely approached her own, when she felt his arm encircle her waist, and began to whirl round in the voluptuous movement, a reaction set in she found it utterly impossible to restrain.

The emotions that had overpowered her at their last memorable meeting returned with additional force; the looks that were bent down upon her as she surrendered herself unresistingly to his guidance were the same that had before so thoroughly subdued her nature; even the music breathed the same tender sentiment as the never-to-be-forgotten *liebeslied*.

Poor Fanny! She forgot every thing but the ecstasy of a loving heart. All her good resolutions vanished into air; she could not withstand the intoxicating influence of that dangerous dance with the man she loved, any more than she had been able to resist the dangerous lyric. Each made the same entrancing declaration; in every phrase of the delicious waltz-tune she heard the same passionate refrain, "Yes, am I not fondly thine own?"

What could she do but look the happiness she felt? And as she could not but see that her partner gazed with the most fervid expression, how could she avoid enjoying that happiness thoroughly? The impulse was irresistible; the tide of passion had set in and swept with it all minor interests, all prudent considerations, all conscientious obstacles. Geraldine was overlooked; there was no denying so obvious a fact: the friends had become rivals!

Fanny was unnaturally excited during the rest of that evening. At supper she was so brilliant as to fascinate all the gentlemen who had the much-coveted privilege of being near her. Geraldine on the contrary was evidently more reserved than usual.

On their return-ride the vivacity of the former displayed itself in a flow of animated comment on the ball, and the persons she had met. Very little was said by her companions; and at last, finding no response in either, Fanny leant back in the carriage and gave herself up to the sweet indulgence of her own thoughts.

She was quite satisfied Arthur loved her ; and as it was equally clear that he did not love Geraldine, it was useless for the latter to think of him. It was no fault of hers that he preferred her, and she could not in the least help having fallen in love with him. She had done all she could to resist her impressions in his favour, out of regard for her dear cousin, but had found it impossible to resist any longer.

Geraldine must be reasonable. She must know that a man can only love one woman at a time ; and that however much she may have cared for Arthur, as nothing can be more evident than that he does not care for her, it must be equally foolish and wrong to go on devoting her thoughts to him.

Perhaps dear Geraldine was too much a child to fix the affections of a man who had enjoyed such opportunities of seeing the world ; and there was plenty of time for her to meet with some one better suited to her. She should take an early opportunity of explaining every thing, and had

no doubt that her cousin would at once reconcile herself to what could not be helped.

With such reasoning, Fanny Scudamore satisfied her conscience, and then thought over the evidence that had sufficed to convince her that Arthur only waited an opportunity to declare himself her lover. She recalled her first musical *tête-à-tête*; she dwelt on the last. What could be more convincing than that stolen caress? He had never attempted any thing of the kind with Geraldine; he had never taken such delightful walks and rides with her alone; he had never uttered to her any of the tender speeches which he had then and there expressed; he had never sung to her such passionate love-songs; he had never gazed on her with such thrilling looks; moreover she had never rested in his arms, while exquisite music interpreted the feelings with which his glances told her she was regarded.

So she allowed her dreamy self-contented thoughts to glide along this pleasant groove; and when she returned home, and learnt that her

father had long since retired to his chamber, prepared to follow his example, in the best possible spirits, without in the slightest degree noticing the somewhat sullen "good-night" of one of her companions, and the unnatural silence of the other.

The two girls entered their dressing-room in a mood apparently totally different from that with which they had so long been in the habit of preparing for their night's rest. The time-honoured season of confidential gossip was no longer heeded. Fanny tried for a time to get her cousin into conversation by affecting to chat unconcernedly about what they had both seen and heard; but Geraldine occupied herself with the business of unfastening and disrobing, and gave very short replies.

As of old, they sat brushing-out their luxuriant back-hair, but at *two* toilet-tables; their hearts, alas! further apart than their mirrors. The elder had decided not to bring on the one important discussion then. Geraldine was to go back to Rose Lawn after breakfast; and she could not

think of distressing her by unpleasant explanations.

Had they been in their own well-remembered chamber, every object would have reminded her of the endearing reliance that had so long been maintained by them. The framed samplers they had worked together; the chalk-drawings in which both had assisted; the neat shelf of books they had read or studied for years of delightful companionship, recreation, and confidence. But the room was that of an ordinary furnished house in Mayfair, and contained nothing suggestive of the past Eden in which their happiness had been so perfect. So Fanny, desisting from all attempts at sociality, easily glided into a newer Paradise, where the Adam exclusively was her own.

Once more she was moving through the flowery paths of memory, redolent of passion-flowers, of pensées, of forget-me-nots, and of numerous other equally suggestive decorations indigenous in the garden of the soul. Smiles and glances illumined them with a tropical sunshine; and melodies and

words, which sounded more musical than Apollo's lute, filled the atmosphere.

Was it possible to forget phrases that recurred with all the force of an enchantment? There was a spell in every tender word, in every thrilling tone, that subjected all her senses. What loving heart could resist such sentiments?

“Darf, darf, darf ich dir trauen,  
Dir, dir, mit leichten Sinn,  
Du, du kannst auf mich bauen;  
Weisst ja, wie gut ich dir bin!”

Or, in the English version :

“Speak, speak, Love, I implore thee !  
Say, say, ‘Hope may be thine !’  
Thou, thou knowst that I love thee ;  
Say but thou wilt be mine !”

Fanny had mentally just finished the eloquent refrain, “Yes! yes! am I not fondly thine own?” and, entirely absorbed in the exquisite waking dream, her hand, holding the brush she had been mechanically drawing through her long dark tresses, was suspended over her well-shaped head,



and a smile of ineffable sweetness was playing round her beautiful mouth, when a voice and a touch dissipated the Alnaschar delusion.

"Fanny!" cried Geraldine, who was kneeling at her cousin's feet, and looking up into her flushed face could read there confirmation of her worst suspicions.

"Fanny!" she cried more sharply.

The dreamer awoke, looked down, and shuddered. She had carefully avoided gazing at her cousin; and now the accusing face spoke a reproach that seemed to strike every nerve. It was not that of a weeping Niobe, of a deserted Psyche, or of an agonised Dido. It was of a higher and a purer feminine type. It was that of an angel mourning over a lost soul.

Fanny tried to turn away her conscience-stricken countenance; but the eyes that appealed so touchingly, held her own gaze fixed as in a vice. Her beautiful face now seemed to harden and grow dark, as if her heart were turning to stone, against the attack of that sad though uncomplaining

ing look. She could have endured any amount of reproach, but against that pallid death-like sorrow she became dumb and helpless.

She made no resistance, uttered no word ; mechanically she turned round in her chair, and took the uplifted palms of the kneeling girl in her own, and, with features that seemed to have been turned to marble, held back from the ghastly face as if it were a corpse of which she knew herself the murderer.

Low and tremulous was the voice that repeated the Lord's Prayer. One passage was more distinct in its delivery than the rest. It was—

“Forgive us our trespasses, *as we forgive them that trespass against us.*”

Fanny felt a choking sensation, and began to breathe with difficulty. But she could not take her gaze from those sad but terribly accusing eyes. In the same position she listened to the childish prayers and hymns, every word a penance that became more difficult to endure. At last came the benediction on all near and dear to both.

Towards the conclusion the voice became tremulous, but was inexpressibly sweet and fervent.

*"God bless cousin Fanny, and make her happy all the days of her life."*

Two or three heavy drops fell upon the uplifted hands. The benediction continued in a more pathetic tone :

"Grant, O Almighty Father, the prayer of a desolate orphan for every blessing Thy unspeakable love can bestow, on one who was a mother to the motherless, the kindest of guardians, and the truest of friends. May all her dearest wishes be gratified, and her fondest expectations accomplished. May her loving heart never know the misery of disappointment. May—"

Down on the face of the kneeling girl poured a heavy shower, the bosom of the penitent heaved with violent spasms, and in an agony of convulsive sobs she threw her arms round her cousin's neck.

"Dear Fanny," the latter murmured gently, "don't fret, there's a dear. I've nearly got over

it, though indeed it was very hard to bear from *you*."

Fanny now burst into violent hysterics. She wrung her hands, she threw her arms about wildly, passionate sobbing choked her utterance, a torrent of tears deluged her cheeks.

"Darling, you must be calm," exclaimed Geraldine, trying to restrain her violence. "I don't blame you, dear. Indeed I don't. I ought to have known that he was sure to like you the best. You couldn't help it, of course. And Arthur is not to blame either. No doubt he thinks me a child. And you are so charming, how could he avoid loving you! I don't care about it, dear,—at least not much."

The anguish in her soul was more truly expressed by her tearful eyes than by her self-denying words. This, however, was entirely lost upon her companion, who was now quite insensible.

Geraldine kissed and cried over the inanimate face, lavishing the most tender epithets upon the

pale lips and stiffening figure; but not finding any improvement in her appearance, she quietly unfolded her arms, and let the body drop to the floor, with the head and its dark silken treasures resting upon a footstool. Then she glided to the ewer, returning in a moment to sprinkle the beloved face with water.

She did not like to alarm the household, all of whom must be, she knew, by this time in bed, yet was dreadfully frightened, for her cousin had never had such a fit before. An instinctive delicacy, too, told her that Fanny's condition ought to be kept secret. So in fear and trembling, yet with the most affectionate solicitude, she applied the ordinary remedy for a swoon, and watched its effect.

The sprinkling had been repeated, and signs of returning consciousness were beginning to appear. Geraldine poured water into a tumbler, placed it on the toilet-table close at hand, then sat down on the floor and vigorously chafed the hands of the still rigid and unconscious patient. Pre-

sently, finding them become more flexible, she sat on the chair and raised the recumbent figure into a sitting position in her arms, and with innumerable endearments and the very tenderest expressions, placed the glass of water to her lips.

A little was swallowed, and then the eyes opened with a dreamy stare.

"Thank God, dear, you are getting better!" exclaimed Geraldine fervently. "Now take a good draught, there's a darling Fanny; then I will bathe your temples with eau de Cologne, and you shall be quite well, and never be so naughty as to frighten me in this dreadful way again."

Fanny did as she was desired, and after a heavy sigh, submitted to the cooling lotion with a look that showed she was scarcely yet mistress of herself.

"I am so glad you are better," exclaimed the attentive nurse, fondly kissing her charge, evidently totally oblivious of the wreck of her own happiness. "I will never distress you again, dear.

I am quite content that you shall be as happy with Arthur as you can wish to be. For indeed, indeed, I feel that I could much easier lose him than I could lose you, darling mamma, whom I have loved so many years, and who was always so very good to me. It was very wrong of me to feel so miserable; but it is all over now, dear. I shall soon be quite cheerful; and you will love your poor Geraldine again, won't you, darling mamma?"

Fanny's eyes opened very wide; she smoothed back her dark tresses with both hands; and gazed with a smile of almost divine tenderness into the pale pleading face now so close to her own; then threw her arms round her neck, and pressed her lips to the dear eloquent little mouth.

She did not speak a word of reply as she put up her hair, but there was a look in those now brilliant eyes that spoke a determination no language could have expressed so forcibly. Yes, she had entered into more good resolutions, but this time with a tenacity of purpose that would lead her

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unflinching through the valley of the shadow of death.

Fanny and Geraldine slept in each other's arms as of old. They were no longer rivals.



## CHAPTER VI.

### FATHER AND DAUGHTER.

"GERALDINE is gone with her brother to pay a visit to some friends who have just come from the neighbourhood of Maurice Court," said Miss Scudamore, as Captain Calverley entered the drawing-room in May Fair, the morning after the ball at Porchester House. "My father, too, has gone to call upon his old friend the Duke. I expect them in every minute, so you may as well stay. Unless you consider me so very disagreeable a companion that you prefer proceeding in search of more acceptable society."

Arthur looked at the heiress ; a gracious smile lit up her queen-like beauty as she extended her hand to him, rising from a seat at an embroidery-frame, on which she was finishing a gorgeous

and elaborate piece of work that would have been a credit to Miss Linwood, and bore irresistible testimony of her progress in the accomplishments of her ancient instructress.

She was evidently, he thought, in the same gracious mood that had charmed him so much the preceding evening; and though in a much less brilliant toilette, did not look the less fascinating.

He made a gallant speech as a matter of course, as he bowed over the plump fingers he was permitted to hold. She hastily turned away her head, and reseated herself; and when he again caught sight of her face, there was a glow upon her complexion he had not noticed on his entrance.

"By the way," she said, as she resumed her work, "Geraldine and I looked for you every where last night, after supper, without success."

Arthur endeavoured to excuse his early departure, by stating that he had a business appointment in the morning at the Foreign Office; then

drawing a chair near her velvet-stool, improvised a eulogium on her work. This was safe ground, he considered. Indeed, he began to feel a little bewildered by her manner towards him. In person, in feature, she was the same ; but the impulsive companion of those memorable evenings at the piano, the impassioned singer of the eloquent *liebeslied*, had disappeared. The handsome cavalry-officer, with the instinct of a true Calverley, felt assured that the present interview was not the opportunity he had so much desired ; therefore prudently deferred his declaration, contenting himself with gallantries that were not too suggestive.

Miss Scudamore appeared gratified by his compliments ; her eyes shone with more than their usual brilliancy, as she laughingly referred to his immense knowledge of feminine art.

“ But how did you think Geraldine looked last night ? ” she said suddenly, and with a good deal of earnestness. “ It was her first ball, you know ; and I am sure that even dear grandmamma would have been satisfied with her appearance.

Didn't you think her very charming now, Captain Calverley? Every one did in the room ; the Duke particularly."

The fervent admiration he so much desired to express was suppressed when the sentence terminated. He was no longer called "Arthur." This struck him forcibly. As if rendered conscious that he was treading on delicate ground, he satisfied himself by uttering a somewhat commonplace remark.

His beautiful companion looked, he thought, disappointed. "If you knew her as I have known her," she said presently, "you would be quite as partial to her as I am. But, in my opinion, it is scarcely possible for any one to appreciate her sufficiently ; she is so thoroughly good. Geraldine was always the favourite with dear grandmamma ; but I had no right to complain, for I knew she was better than I was. She deserved to be every body's favourite. I don't wonder, therefore, that she should be such a favourite with the Duke."

Again the rising eulogium was nipped in the

bud, and he answered the charming enthusiast with a mere compliment.

"I am inclined to think with dear grand-mamma," said the heiress, scarcely repressing her vexation, "that the race of gentlemen have degenerated since her youthful days; and that there never has been one at court fit to hold a candle to my grandpapa."

Captain Calverley endeavoured to controvert this sweeping assertion; but his defence of his contemporaries did not quite produce the effect he desired.

"As Mr. Burke very justly said," she added, with increased animation, "the age of chivalry has gone; and, as I say, the age of gallantry has departed after it. We have long since heard of the last of adventurous knights who would gladly attempt impossible things for the love of their liege ladies; and Sir Walter Raleigh was, I think, the only gallant who sacrificed a handsome garment to keep his mistress dry-shod."

The handsome Captain again attempted the

advocacy of the present generation of gentlemen, and rather zealously too, for he felt that though the censure was general, it was intended to have a particular application; but in what *he* had been remiss, he could not for the life of him guess, and had no time to think.

After all, he might be the right man in the right place; and this unexpected change in the more than half-won heiress a feminine device to pique him into a reliable demonstration of feeling in her favour. Probably the unresisted caress and the too manifest enjoyment of the waltz had been reviewed with some self-disapproval, and the dear creature had resolved to be cold and circumspect. In such cases plot must be met with counterplot. He would try a device in his turn.

After a good deal of pleasant badinage had passed on both sides, and there could be no question that the heiress was in a most amiable humour, the gallant Captain began to be a little less lively in his sallies; the natural consequence of being impressed with the seriousness of the step

he was about to take. He hesitated, and became confused, as if a sense of the great stake he had at issue filled his mind. He glanced at his companion; she was pursuing her work with greater attention to it than she had hitherto shown.

"Now, Miss Scudamore," said he, "I must beg your kind consideration of a statement I find it absolutely necessary that I should seize this unlooked-for opportunity of finding you alone for making, without another moment's delay."

She did not move her eyes from her work; but their expression grew suddenly more serious.

"I have been long known to you. I could dwell with the deepest sense of pleasure on those gratifying proofs of your regard with which you have been pleased to honour me from time to time, since that to me most fortunate hour when I first received evidence of the flattering interest I had awakened in the hearts of the amiable inmates of that charming cottage. But it would take much longer than this interview would permit to describe the influence of those precious tokens of

feminine kindness. Let it suffice to say that it has induced me to attempt to carve out for myself a career which should prove me not entirely unworthy of such favour."

He paused. The heiress seemed embarrassed. The needle stood still in her pliant fingers; and her eyes, with a kind of dreamy expression, were fixed upon the trembling thread of silk that connected it with the canvas.

He resumed.

"My feelings cannot have remained to this time altogether unknown to you, Miss Scudamore; and though I acknowledge their presumption, though I confess that even with the advantages I have contrived to gain, since this devotion first absorbed all the best, the highest principles of my nature, I am far from being in a position to claim the distinction to which I have so ambitiously aspired, I will boldly lay before you the state of my affections, and, with the most implicit trust in your goodness, implore you—"

He had taken an unresisting hand, and could



not fail to observe that a powerful struggle was going on in the breast of his attentive listener. This declaration was intended for Geraldine, she felt sure ; and the thought that she might assist in making the dear child happy triumphed over every other consideration.

“If you could afford me,” he added, “even the slightest prospect that this one absorbing pursuit of my life was not likely to prove an empty dream, you would make me the proudest, as well as the happiest, of men.”

“I see no reason why you should despair,” she said softly and tremulously. “With such earnest devotion any woman ought to be satisfied.”

Arthur did not wait for any further approval : in a transport of gratitude he kissed the hand she had allowed him to retain ; indeed, I do not know into what extravagances he might have been led under the influence of the pleasurable excitement he experienced, had he not heard approaching footsteps. The handle of the door turned. He

hastily dropped the fair hand, and pushed back his seat. The heiress resumed her employment with manifest embarrassment, as Lord Fitzmaurice and her father entered.

The former stopped suddenly on the threshold, regarding both with rather a searching scrutiny. He did not seem altogether pleased. Presently, however, he addressed his old comrade in his usual friendly way, as he threw himself listlessly on a couch.

For a moment or two the honest red face of Jack Scudamore seemed clouded, nevertheless his welcome was in his usual boisterous fashion.

“Glad you’re come, Captain,” he cried, grasping his hand vigorously. “I’ve heard news that the member for Delamere has been taken dangerously ill—indeed, the poor fellow is as good as run to earth—and I’ve just been arranging with Porchester that you shall take his place. You see, I want some one willing to do my duty as well as his own—younger and abler for the work. I find I haven’t the wind, or the spirit, or something.

Zounds, sir, I can't go the pace—that's the long and the short of it!"

Captain Calverley warmly expressed his thanks for this mark of his friendly regard.

"You will have all the Porchester interest as well as mine," he said; "but the Whigs will be sure to start their man, so you may expect to be hard pressed. Be first in the field, Captain, go over every thing. Neck or nothing—that's your sort in a contested election as well as in the hunting-field. I know you can do it," he cried, slapping his young friend on the shoulder, "and will back you to win—but you must secure a good start; and as you will be mounted by the government, by George, sir, it must be your own fault if you don't distance your competitor in the race."

Arthur expressed his readiness to follow his advice in every thing, which evidently pleased him. His broad face seemed to increase in ruddiness, and his clear blue eyes shone with double vivacity.

"I envy you, you dog," he exclaimed in apparent vexation, "your health, and strength, and

ability to do the work cut out for you. But I remember the time," he added, quickly brightening up, "when I had quite as much go in me. Every body knew in Delamere Vale what Jack Scudamore was good for ; I was up to every thing and down at nothing. Could box, and wrestle, and ride with the best man in the county. Did you ever hear how I won the race with Black Bess, against Billy Thorndyke on his famous horse 'The Tinker'?"

The Captain avowed that he had never heard of that achievement.

"I thought as much," replied the old fox-hunter, with his hearty laugh. "You idlers about town, of course, never hear of such things. Billy bragged almost as much about his horse as he did about himself. The Tinker could beat any thing that ever was foaled, and his owner could thresh the best man that ever walked in shoe-leather. I laid him a cool hundred to run him a two-mile heat on Banbury Downs, on a mare I'd bred myself, by Highflyer out of sister to Eclipse. I

waited on him, Captain, about half the distance, keeping well up to his horse's flanks, and then increased the pace. We were soon neck and neck in spite of his strenuous exertions to keep the lead. In five minutes I was a length in front, while Billy was threshing away at The Tinker, as if determined to take the hide off his ribs. I jerked the reins a little, and Black Bess went in with a rush that brought her in first by about half a dozen lengths.

"Billy Thorndyke was terribly out of temper," he added; "for half the county were on the Downs, and insinuated that I hadn't won fairly, which put my blood up. From angry words we came to blows. He challenged me to fight there and then, and, as I wasn't inclined to look small before my neighbours and friends, a ring was presently formed, and we set-to with right good will. Zounds, sir, in half an hour Billy was obliged to acknowledge me the better man, and I got the name of the Cock of the County from that time forth."

The Captain expressed his admiration of his friend's prowess, who then laughingly walked across the room to his daughter, with whom he held what seemed a confidential conversation, while the two young men interchanged a few social commonplaces. Presently he returned, and urged the Captain to lose no time in getting to the scene of action. He gave him full instructions as to his proceedings, and heartily wished him success.

An hour or so after Arthur had quitted the house of Jack Scudamore, he and his daughter were left alone in the drawing-room.

"Fanny," he said to her suddenly; "how do you and Fitz get on together?"

"Oh, much as we have always done, papa," was the unembarrassed reply.

"Not lovers, eh?"

"Not to my knowledge."

"Humph!" cried the fox-hunter, with a much graver expression in his face than commonly rested there. "I thought there might be some

engagement between you, you two having lived so much together."

"Nothing of the sort, papa. . I like Fitz very well, and he likes me, I daresay, much in the same way. He has always been kind and amiable, and we have got on as pleasantly as possible together."

"But you entertain no thoughts of him as a husband, eh, Fanny?"

"Certainly not!"

This was said with a decision that admitted of no dispute. Still the Squire did not seem satisfied. His broad red face looked gloomy, as he flung himself back in the arm-chair, with his hands thrust deep into his pockets, apparently a little puzzled as well as annoyed.

Miss Scudamore remained standing by the mirror over the chimney-piece, listlessly furling and unfurling her fan.

"Then there's my friend Captain Calverley," he added, after a short pause, and looking her straight in the face. She started slightly.

"What about him, papa?" she said, quietly.

"He seems very much at home with you girls, Fanny. Has been a good deal at the cottage, hasn't he? Made himself particularly agreeable, I suppose. Admires you, I daresay."

"He has never told me so."

Her manner was still very quiet; but there was an intonation in her voice, when these words were uttered, that might have betrayed to a more experienced observer of female characteristics than the Cheshire Squire, that the subject was of more interest to her than she cared to express.

Jack Scudamore fidgetted in his chair, and looked embarrassed. He had evidently something on his mind that he did not at all know how to express. His beautiful daughter was perhaps aware of this, but did not seem inclined to afford any assistance. The fan was opened and closed, opened and closed again; her look became dreamy and pre-occupied.

"I tell you what it is, my girl," cried the Squire, with a desperate earnestness, that made him more red in the face than ever. "If there's



one thing in the world that I am more proud of than all else I possess, it is yourself!"

Miss Scudamore's face lit up with a sudden brightness, that rendered it doubly attractive.

"Yes," he continued, "I was uncommon glad when my horse Jupiter won the Derby and the Oaks in one year. By George, I was more pleased than I can tell you; and Jupiter, you know, being brother to Ganymede, who won the Doncaster St. Leger the year preceding, made me regard it as a greater triumph. There was not a man in the county I envied. Yet I do not know how it is, but I feel prouder of being your father, Fanny, dear, than ever I was with being the owner of Jupiter and Ganymede."

She looked down upon her father with eyes that were evidently gathering moisture.

"Don't you remember your last visit to Delamere Court?" said the old gentleman, with what seemed a forced vivacity. "How delighted all the Hunt were with you; how enthusiastic they were about the fearless way you rode to hounds—how

charmed with the matchless grace with which you did the honours of my table, and how they raved about your beauty and accomplishments? By George, I did not envy the greatest man in Cheshire."

"Yes, I remember, papa; they were all extremely kind, and I was very happy to see how pleased you were."

She gazed brightly and affectionately on his frank though fast-ageing features, and his silvery hair.

"Pleased!" he echoed, slapping his knee with his palm. "By George, there could be no mistake about that. Lord Vernon rode up to me at the meet, and publicly congratulated me on being the father of so lovely a girl; and all the fellows clustered about me to shake hands. Sir Harry Chester, when you came in at the death, offered to bet a hundred guineas that your match wasn't to be found in the county. Tom Holyoake, at the Hunt dinner, rolled under the table after proposing your health for at least the twentieth time; and many

of the fellows who got on the chairs to join in the demonstrations the toast excited, fell to the floor, from whence they did not rise till they had slept themselves sober. Finally, four of the soberest of the lot insisted on carrying me in triumph in my chair round the dining-room, amid a chorus of shouts and cheers loud enough to awaken the dead; and I narrowly escaped getting my neck broken by one of the bearers stumbling against the side-board. Zounds, Fanny! if every one of the Hunt wasn't as proud of you as I was."

Miss Scudamore, with a sunny smile that made the tears in her eyes glisten like brilliants, threw down her fan, moved across the hearth-rug, sat on a stool close to her father's feet, took one of his hands in hers, and resting her cheek against it on his knee, gazed up affectionately into his face.

Honest Jack Scudamore was apparently a little confused by this movement; there was a slight twitch at the corners of his mouth, and his eyes winked rapidly. He remained silent a moment or two, and looked irresolute. The fact was, he was

about to take the most formidable leap he had ever attempted, and was far from confident of the powers of his steed.

Presently he seemed to call up all his energies for a dash.

“Ah! but the proudest time of all, Fanny,” he said hurriedly and anxiously, “was on the night of the ball at Porchester Castle, that was given in your honour, and the Duke, having before all that brilliant company then assembled complimented me on your appearance, in a speech that made me envied by every father in the room, opened the ball with you; and your beauty and your grace enraptured the entire assemblage. By George, I was as happy as I was proud!”

The beautiful face was bent down, and the warm lips pressed the old fox-hunter's hard rough hand as tenderly as if it had been an infant's. The only answering demonstration was a tighter grasp of the ivory fingers the hard rough hand contained.

“My fervent blessings on that dear old grand-

mother of yours," exclaimed Jack Scudamore, warmly, "for making you so admirable as to attract every one who comes near you, and so good as to love the poor old father who is so very proud of you, better than the finest of the many fine young fellows who throng around you in the hope of obtaining a smile."

"Dear good grandmamma," cried a half-choking voice; "she taught me to pray to God to grant you the truest enjoyments of life!"

"And they were showered on me in prodigal abundance when I received a True Woman in the motherless child I had trusted to her guidance."

A fonder pressure of the hand followed this sentence. The emotion of both kept them silent till the old fox-hunter became aware that the terrible leap had yet to be taken. He spurred his steed, and gathered himself up resolutely for a spring.

"You see, Fanny, my pet, the Duke and I have been friends from boyhood, very fast friends.

Indeed I once fought a big chap who had struck him, and gave the fellow a thorough licking. By George, I did, before the whole school. And since he came to the title, he has been doing me all kinds of good-natured actions, and has treated me like a brother. Consequently, I cannot help liking such a man."

"Yes, papa, I know you were always very partial to the Duke."

"Very partial, Fanny, and very anxious to show my gratitude for the many important services his Grace has rendered me."

"Yes, papa."

"And when I noticed how much he admired my darling child, so great a man as he is, not only in the county, but in the nation, the idea came into my head that—that—he might be desirous of a closer, tenderer bond to secure our long friendship; and that I should attain the summit of human ambition and felicity, could I be permitted to live to see you—*his Duchess*."

Jack Scudamore had taken the leap, and he

now looked confused, and felt giddy with the consciousness of his temerity.

"Papa!" exclaimed his daughter, gazing up into his face with her bright features expressive of the most profound astonishment.

"I know the Duke is much too old for you, my dear," he exclaimed in a flurried unsteady manner. "For as you know, he is nearly of my own age. But much to his credit, he has lived a temperate life, therefore his constitution must be a thousand times better than that of half the dashing young rakes and dangling idlers about town. Then you know, my pet, he is always doing good; indeed, I don't know any one who possesses a kinder heart. It was only a few months back, you know, Fanny dear, he presented you with your Andalusian barb Zephyr, of which you are so fond."

"It was most kind of his Grace, but I had no idea—"

"Of course not. The Duke wouldn't so much as hint of such a thing, though he said to me after the ball, 'Jack,' said he, 'that divine daughter

of yours, is worthy of being the Queen of the county.'"

"The Duke was always very good to me, yet—"

"Ah! and how proud I should be to see you the acknowledged queen of all Cheshire," cried the old man with renewed fervour. "What an enviable position you would enjoy, my pet—not only at Porchester Castle, and throughout the Vale, but at Court, among the great people of the great town world. Every body must needs envy you, not only as the wife of the most popular Lord Lieutenant of the Kingdom, but as the lady of one of the greatest men in the state, the friend and adviser of his sovereign, and the dispenser of court honours and rewards. By George, your poor old father's heart would leap with joy every time he heard the announcement of your title!"

"Has the Duke expressed to you any intention of—"

"Yes, Fanny dear. He first intimated his wish that you should be his Duchess when he last



came to Delamere Court; and this morning I have received a note from him, requesting my good offices in furthering his suit to you. The Duke says that he never had any thing so much at heart in his life, and declares that your happiness shall be his constant study."

"The Duke is as good as he is noble—but—"

"Only let me live to hear you called Duchess of Porchester, my pet, to see you at the head of the county aristocracy, and the leader of the rank and fashion at court. Only let me live to see that day, and I wouldn't care to see another. No, not even if every horse in my stable was then to be declared a winner of every crack race in the three kingdoms. No, by George I wouldn't!"

This emphatic declaration evidently made an impression. The fair face which had looked up to his, clouded with a sense of distress that produced the "yets" and "buts" the anxious advocate had prudently cut short, was filled again with the softening spirit of filial affection. She gazed earnestly into her father's unsteady eyes.

“Would it make you *very happy*, papa?”

The question was asked plaintively, with a tremulous accent.

“Happy, my girl!” echoed Honest Jack Scudamore, “nothing in this world could make me half so happy.”

“Then it shall be as you wish.”

As she said this, Miss Scudamore flung herself on her father’s neck, and began to sob passionately.

The old fox-hunter was about to congratulate himself that he had made the formidable leap with more success than he had ventured to anticipate; but these signs of distress suggested the fear that he had not yet got clear over all the obstacles. His affectionate heart became alarmed.

“But if you don’t care enough for the Duke to marry him, Fanny dear,” he said caressingly, “I won’t think any thing more about it. You shall have whoever you like, darling; though I never saw a fellow approach you, however distinguished he may have been by person or for-

tune, whom I thought worthy to tie your shoe-strings."

The sentence ended with the customary emphatic addition ; but the only reply it produced was a closer embrace and more hysterical sobbing.

"The Duke's the best friend that Jack Scudamore ever had," he continued, though with a more unsteady voice ; "and I have set my heart upon seeing you his Duchess. But if you're sure you can't be happy if you marry him, of course I'm not such a brute as to persist in it. I must write at once, and let my old friend know that I can't have him as a son-in-law. 'Twill be hard lines to me as well as to him, poor fellow ; but you see it cannot be helped, Fanny dear."

Honest Jack Scudamore, with the back of his hard horny hand, brushed away from his cheeks the tears of disappointment he could not suppress.

"No, no, dear papa," his daughter exclaimed, as if making a great effort to conquer her emotion. "It was very foolish of me to appear otherwise than

gratified with your solicitude for my welfare. But I have quite made up my mind. Please to tell the Duke, dearest papa, that I am ready to become his wife."

A long and loving embrace, and the tenderest of affectionate caresses, concluded this decision. The old fox-hunter wisely held his peace. He was fully satisfied that he had cleared the formidable leap in first-rate style.

## CHAPTER VII.

### A PHYSICIAN OF SOULS.

IN accordance with his old friend's instructions, Arthur took up his residence in Delamere Court, and was immediately engaged in an active canvass among a rather widely-spread constituency. He had the hearty coöperation of every member of the Delamere Hunt. Indeed, as it became known that he could claim the support of honest Jack Scudamore, he had offers to serve on his committee from so large a number of the resident landed gentry, that his election seemed secure before he had asked for a single vote.

All the Vale was immediately stirred with political excitement. The staunchest fox-hunters neglected their covers for his committee-room; or if they rode across country, it was to secure a distant freeholder. It was "hark forward tan-

tivy"—not to be in at the death of Sly Reynard, but to place their selected representative at the head of the poll.

Not a little to the candidate's surprise, the usual shibboleths of party were dispensed with by his eager supporters. The placards that made the dead walls eloquent did not announce his devotion to Church and State; they merely made known, in the largest letters, the alliance of "Honest Jack Scudamore and Captain Calverley." The recommendation expressed every thing. No doubt could exist of the Captain's fitness for parliamentary honours. No one dared to challenge his ability to represent so important a borough.

Indeed, so enthusiastic were some of Jack Scudamore's hunting associates, that Lord Vernon was known to have knocked up three of his best horses. Sir Harry Chester spouted himself into a chronic hoarseness; and Tom Holyoake, in consequence of his perpetually proposing the popular candidate's health, was obliged to be carried to bed every night during the election.

There was open house at Delamere Court; and the proverbial hospitality of its owner appeared to have become more prodigal than ever. Arthur was accepted as his representative, and wore his honours as well as a sound constitution and a fair share of convivial spirit would permit.

But these riotous orgies were but little to his taste, notwithstanding the fact which became more evident every day, that he was winning golden opinions from the jovial fox-hunters, by the genial manner in which he presided over their reunions. He told stories of hair-breadth 'scapes in the saddle, and wonderful sporting adventures that out-marvelled their own; and ventured to sing a song, or repeat an anecdote, when called upon, that had quite as much hunting energy infused into it as his *confrères* seemed to find in Tom Holyoake's energetic version of "Bright Chanticleer proclaims the morn;" or Sir Harry Chester's boisterous declamation of "Tom Moody."

But often, when apparently absorbed as a listener to such dramatic representations, Arthur

found his mind wandering far from the performance. . Perhaps, in glancing round the room, his eye fell upon a picture or a trophy he had gazed upon, associated with some one who now made the object full of the tenderest interest, and he became lost in a crowd of entrancing associations, till the rude jingling of the silver forks on the dessert-plates, the emphatic thumpings on the table, and the tumultuous plaudits and exclamations which betokened the close of an effective song or speech, effectually roused him into a sense of his position.

Whenever he could escape from the associates his candidateship procured him, he rambled alone in the gardens and grounds of the estate, where he surrendered his imagination to the alternate charm of retrospection and anticipation. If he gained his election, he should consider himself to be mounting with a firm foot on the first round of the ladder of Ambition, at the top of which Love appeared with outstretched arms, waiting to reward him with the most prized of those honours such elevation would place within his reach. The pro-



gress of the statesman, the Calverley archives assured him, secured the advancement of the courtier, the soldier, and diplomatist; and when he compared his qualifications with those which had been sufficient to lead his kinsmen to greatness, he felt confident that his career would not disgrace theirs.

He might, to be sure, fail in attaining that exalted post in the City of Palaces which had brought his fortunate kinsman so large a windfall from the pagoda-tree; possibly he might also miss the less profitable viceroyship in the land of saints other members of his family had gained, with a fair amount of invested income; yet he was too sanguine to consider impossible such prizes in the great lottery of life, in which he had been seeking to secure an investment. As for the minor prizes, such as had been obtained by so many Calverleys, he felt a happy confidence respecting them, which would have done credit to the most imaginative of that fortunate family.

Arthur passed a good deal of time on horseback, not insensible to the advantage of having

the pick of the renowned Delamere Court stables ; but though his hunting friends were constant in their attendance, he managed occasionally to get a gallop by himself, and not unfrequently a more quiet meditative walk through green lanes, over flowery fields, and into leafy nooks of forest, endeared to him as the haunts of his youth. Then, with the reins loose and whip idle, he rode slowly on, oblivious of the feverish dream that intimated his Future, and regarding only the glowing visions that illumined his Past.

Had not the well-married Calverleys congratulated him on his footing with the heiress ? Indeed, did not Lord Madras, when his lordship shook hands with him at parting, declare that he was the luckiest of the family ; and had not the Bishop's widow asserted to his elder brother, Sir Edward Calverley Calverley, that he had realised all her pious expectations ? Nevertheless, somehow, he did not feel quite easy as to his position with the tantalising beauty. Her quiet parting with him had disappointed him extremely.

Arthur's retrospections would travel further a-field. The holiday enjoyments of his youth, how very pleasant it was to recal them, more especially those far away rambles from the quiet vicarage, with its long hours of engrossing study, and the many strange and occasionally dangerous adventures they procured. Fishing excursions on the Mere, wanderings in search of rare birds or animals, desperate climbings, resolute clamberings, imminent risks; sometimes losing his way, more than once nearly losing his life. It is impossible to express the gratification he experienced in reviewing these animated scenes of his life on the very spots where they had occurred.

It was while in the full enjoyment of such stirring retrospection that he emerged from a thick wood, and came suddenly upon the ruins of the Abbey where had begun and ended the great romance of his youth. A sudden rush of memory passed like a flood over those tender associations which Time had subsequently obliterated, and brought back all that strange and mysterious

adventure. He checked his horse, and paused, not daring to advance nearer.

Years had elapsed since the prohibition had been uttered, surely he might now be permitted to approach those hallowed precincts? But he remembered the serene dignity of the estimable lady who had addressed that caution to him on behalf of the poor sisters under her charge, and recalled the touching motherly affection which beamed in her truly spiritual countenance, and did not dare to do any thing that might appear like a second intrusion on the privacy of his benefactresses.

Arthur hesitated. There could be no harm, he thought, in hearing at a distance the sacred strains which had made so powerful an impression on his mind when approaching that spot so many years before. He listened. His horse remained perfectly still, gazing about expectantly, but more curiously at the rich herbage within his reach, evidently careless of the architectural masterpiece that stood so imposingly even in its ruin some fifty

yards off. The rustling of the leaves, the chorus of the joyous birds, and the pleasant humming of innumerable insects, alone broke the silence. No swelling note of jubilant anthem or choral song filled the anxious listener's attentive ear; no wailing *Miserere*, no glorious *Te Deum*, no stirring *Hallelujah* thrilled his soul.

At last, under the conviction that the Abbey was untenanted, he dismounted, tied his steed to the old thorn, and then slowly and reverently entered the sacred building by the principal door. He found himself in one of the aisles near where he must have fallen from the window, and could view the entire length and breadth of the edifice. Every part presented itself to him as an old friend, claiming affectionate remembrance.

It is impossible to express the gratification he felt as he dwelt upon each delicate pillar, every beautiful window, and each choice example of mediæval carving that had before excited his admiration. As for the grotesque heads, their Gothic grimaces were more welcome to him than

would have been a Valhalla of Teutonic-Greek divinities. And when he came to his old acquaintance, the demoniac gargoyle, he hailed the demoniac visage like a friend and a brother.

He passed along the entire interior, in this way renewing innumerable friendships in the venerable pile; but the further he proceeded the more certain he became that the objects of the tenderer interests excited nearly a decade prior to his present visit, were no longer there. Indeed, not a trace could he discover of any additions to render the Abbey habitable. The frame-work of the windows that were most perfect were open to the bats by night, and the birds by day; the door-ways were without doors; many of the shafts of the pillars without capitals; and the external walls were cracking and crumbling, despite of the clinging lichens that tried to hold the masonry together.

He could not distinguish the refectory, nor the oratory, where he had furtively witnessed so much of the inner life of those amiable women.

Oh, could he have heard again their tender midnight services, the choral beauty of which provoked the nightingales to rivalry, he would have waited out the day without a murmur. But the place had been completely deserted by the pious recluses. There was not a vestige of them any where.

At last he found himself in the cemetery ; and the fascinating terror of that midnight burial, as a pair of gaunt arms rose out of the half-made grave into the lurid moonlight, again stole over his senses. So vividly had the scene been impressed upon his mind, that every weather-stained and broken memorial of the dead monks in that enclosure appeared familiar to him, till his wandering glance fell upon the fresher tablet that indicated the place of sepulture of the departed nun. Her initials were visible, as well as the date below, and the cross above ; and he dwelt upon the inscription perhaps with a deeper sympathy for being the only evidence he had been able to discover that his knowledge of the place and its

blameless inmates had been real and not imaginary.

Just then what would he have given to have met even the rigid features of Sister Gudule. She was a portion of that community, and therefore possessed a fair title to a share in the reverential interest the good sisters had excited. But there was one—he hardly dared to name her now, so long had his passionate regard for her been absorbed by a later feeling,—ah, could he but be permitted to gaze on her saint-like beauty once again!

All his ambitious aspirations passed like an exhalation in the sunshine when that vision of holiness and purity filled his soul! What ecstasy was there in the idea of seeing her as he had beheld her,—to kneel by her side,—to share in her prayers,—to receive the benediction of her look!

A slight sound startled him out of his reverie. On looking up he beheld an elderly gentleman in a black spencer-waistcoat and small-clothes, silk stockings and gaiters—features in the costume of



professional men generally, but particularly of physicians and clergymen at this time. The stranger took off his hat and exposed a white head, bald at top, giving a venerable character to a peculiarly mild and pleasing aspect. The face was entirely devoid of whisker or beard.

The courtesey was returned as a matter of course, though Arthur felt somewhat startled at such an unexpected appearance.

The stranger approached hat in hand, with a smile on his plump handsome face that greatly increased its natural kindly expression.

"Glad to see you, Captain Calverley," he exclaimed, in a singularly mellow voice, "even among the graves of the poor Benedictines who sleep so soundly under our feet. I am delighted at the opportunity of making the acquaintance of our future member."

There was no resisting the offered hand of such a man, nor his frank yet polished manners. They shook hands heartily; and Arthur reciprocated his apparent good feeling towards him with the ready

tact of a parliamentary candidate in pursuit of the votes of a large constituency, and waited till he should think proper to introduce himself.

"You were inspecting this head-stone," said the stranger, pointing with a gold-headed cane to the tablet that had just called up so many touching reminiscences.

Arthur assented.

"Beneath it rest the remains of one of those innumerable uncanonized martyrs that our religion produces in every Catholic country."

The frank acknowledgment of his faith was not lost on the soldier; nor was he insensible of the reverential manner in which his new acquaintance bared his head, as if acknowledging the presence of the pious dead.

"You knew the deceased lady perhaps?" he inquired.

"I knew the entire sisterhood," the other replied.

At once Arthur hung upon his words, as if ready to venerate him as an oracle.

"They have left this neighbourhood?" he asked,

almost afraid to trust his voice, so deeply interested did he feel in the question.

“Yes; they have returned to their convent in Belgium.”

Arthur turned away, and the two walked together out of the cemetery, till the former found himself once more in the midst of the Abbey ruins, his companion conversing fluently on those portions of the edifice that were most worthy of observation. For a time he was heard but indistinctly. Arthur's thoughts were wandering across the Channel. He yearned for further information. He longed, indeed, to ask a hundred questions. But his associate was evidently a profound antiquarian scholar; and, having a favourite subject, and as he imagined an interested listener, he was too deep in a dissertation on the best varieties of English Gothic, for the other to hope that he would give so much as a moment's attention to any thing else. Indeed he had passed from the Saxon to the Norman, and had dwelt a good deal about perpendicular and other styles, before the gallant

Captain became thoroughly conscious of what was being said.

It was in the midst of a fervent eulogy on William of Wykeham that he ventured an interruption.

"Did the good sisters remain long in England?" he inquired.

"After you left them do you mean?"

Arthur started. The stranger laughed with the most evident enjoyment of his surprise. Arthur could not help feeling embarrassed and confused, believing most firmly that no man living except honest Jack Scudamore knew of his boyish adventure, and *he* could have had only an imperfect knowledge of it.

"But I was describing the state of architecture when it was professed by ecclesiastics," he said; his new acquaintance resuming his discourse where it had been interrupted, not without a certain amount of satisfaction at the other's continued confusion. And then he went on till he had got pretty well through the Plantagenet period.

"Pray tell me whom I have the honour of addressing?" he asked, with a feeling of desperation capable of breaking down small conventionalities.

"Of course. I ought to have told you before. But as we had met already more than once, I hardly thought it could be necessary to remind you of my existence. I really am grieved to find that you have forgotten so old a friend of Jack Scudamore's as Dr. Petre."

Arthur remembered having seen the gentleman at the steeplechase, as well as at the Hunt dinner at Delamere Court; but had heard little more of him than his name, which he had long since forgotten. He was not aware that they had met since then. He was the occupant of the carriage that had waited near the pier at Dover, and had shared in the mysterious dialogue he had overheard in the assembly-room of the hotel.

"Dr. Petre," repeated Captain Calverley: "a physician, I presume?"

"Well; yes, certainly," he replied, in a hesi-

tating manner, which the other fancied implied that he had given over practice.

“You attended those religious ladies in your professional capacity perhaps?” he added.

“Undoubtedly ; and of course, in my professional capacity, I learnt the heavy penalty a certain young gentleman had paid for peeping at them.”

The doctor laughed a frank, cheerful laugh, without an atom of malice in it. Then checking his mirth, added, “But it was really a serious accident ; and if Sister Gudule had not been one of the best bonesetters in all Flanders, you might have been crippled for life ; indeed, at one time a fatal result was apprehended.”

How delightedly Arthur listened when he heard the name of his strange nurse. He hoped it might be the forerunner of another infinitely more pleasant to his ears. But most tantalisingly the doctor abruptly returned to his disquisition, and soon had so much to say about the Tudor buildings and builders, that it seemed utterly hopeless to at-

tempt to divert his attention. Besides, the Captain could perceive that his friend was in an indignant mood. He became more severe as he approached the Reformation, and spoke with bitterness of the ecclesiastical buildings constructed in the reigns of Henry the Eighth and Queen Elizabeth.

Arthur was not at all inclined for a controversy, and therefore made not the least effort to defend the taste of either sovereign. His forbearance was not thrown away; the doctor dwelt lightly on the architectural shortcomings of the Stuarts, though he compounded for his moderation by the most stringent denunciations of the Dutch monstrosities introduced under the auspices of William the Third.

"I hope the very reverend Mother Superior is still in the enjoyment of good health, doctor," Arthur inquired, as soon as there was a pause.

"She was never better, Captain Calverley," was the reply.

"And—" the convent pupil, he was about to add, but did not dare to hazard the inquiry.

“And the good sisters; I hope they are all well.”

The doctor laughed again.

“The poor ladies have their ailments. For instance, Sister Gudule is rheumatic, and Sister—”

“Oh, never mind, doctor,” replied the gallant officer, desirous of escaping a catalogue of feminine ills; “I have no doubt they are better off than their lay sisters, as they deserve to be. Are you going my way?”

They had got beyond the building, and Arthur was about to remount. Dr. Petre held his hand with a cordial grasp.

“I am a physician of souls, my dear sir, not of bodies,” he said, emphatically. “I am the Catholic bishop of this district, — ‘Melpotamos,’ you know,—and in my ‘professional capacity’ intend to influence all Catholic voters in my diocese to vote for you in the forthcoming election. No thanks,” he added, kindly, and still detaining the hand he grasped; “I know what you would say.”

He lowered his voice. “Sister Felicia is, God be thanked, in perfect health; I had the privilege,



last week, of granting her absolution. She is a shining example of all saintlike virtues.'

The good man uttered a blessing, waved his adieux, and walked hurriedly away, before Arthur had recovered from the astonishment created by his unexpected communication.

He rode on, lost in a tumult of bewildering feelings. It became clear to him, however, that his new acquaintance must have been the visitor or spiritual director of the nuns at the time of his residence in the Abbey ruins, which post it seemed probable that he still held, though they had returned to their foreign convent; for he had stated that he recently fulfilled the most confidential office of his church for one of them—the one still by him so tenderly remembered.

Then Dr. Petre must know all that he so much wished to learn respecting "Sister Felicia;" and he, in the first shock of his surprise, had permitted him to leave unquestioned. There were a hundred inquiries he desired to make.

Arthur rode rapidly back to the ruins, and went round it and out of the Abbey in every

direction, but could see nothing of Dr. Petre. He shouted his name, but there came no response. He blamed himself for having permitted the only opportunity to escape that had ever presented itself for learning facts in which he was so profoundly interested; but his reproaches were as unavailing as his desires. The mystery he wished explained seemed likely to remain a mystery to the end of time.

Even if the good Bishop of Melpotamos would have satisfied his curiosity, he had disappeared without leaving a trace of his whereabouts. So there was nothing for it but to try to reconcile himself to his disappointment.

Arthur rode back to Delamere Court to plunge once more into the stream of noisy stirring life, out of which he had temporarily escaped. He lost no time in making inquiries after Dr. Petre, but could only ascertain that the reverend gentleman had left that part of the country, and was believed to have gone abroad. It was long before they again met.

## CHAPTER VIII.

### SUCCESS AND FAILURE.

ARTHUR CALVERLEY had just finished breakfast in the morning-room at Delamere Court, previous to his start for the neighbouring borough, as his nomination was to take place that day. He never looked better, was in high spirits, and as perfectly satisfied with his prospects as a Calverley ought to be, with his feet firmly placed in the lower spokes of the ladder of ambition.

His canvass had been extremely successful, his printed and spoken declarations generally well received; indeed he had contrived to make himself so popular, that some doubts had begun to be entertained that any opposition would be attempted—no one as yet having come forward to

contest the election with the friend of "Honest Jack Scudamore," the popular member for the county.

The Captain rose from the enjoyment of a capital meal, to ring for his horse, when he became aware of a noise of shouting and laughing at no great distance, and the next minute the leading members of his committee burst into the room, apparently wild with pleasurable excitement, each wearing a rosette of gaily-coloured ribbons at his breast.

"Come along, old fellow!" cried Tom Holyoake exultantly, with a look about the eyes as if he had not had time to sleep off the preceding night's jollification.

"This way, Captain!" shouted Sir Harry Chester, pushing his stalwart form through the very demonstrative throng by which his progress was impeded.

"Now, Calverley, my boy, now's your time!" exclaimed the young Marquis Delamere, pressing forward in the same joyous spirit.

Similar invitations were shouted amid a laughing scramble at hand-shaking from the others.

"What is it, gentlemen? What do you want me to do?" demanded the somewhat puzzled candidate, seizing his hat, as he found himself taken hold of by his noisy friends, and led to the door.

"Your triumphal car, sir, awaits you," replied Lord Vernon. "You have to make your public entry into the borough of Delamere Magna; and Caesar never entered Rome during his career of conquest, with half the honour you are to receive on this proud and memorable occasion. Three cheers, gentlemen, for the future member for Delamere!"

Then, amid a wild chorus of cheering, mingled with hearty laughter, Captain Calverley allowed himself to be pushed, dragged, and led to the front-entrance of the mansion.

Intense was his astonishment at beholding there the entire establishment of the Squire gazing delightedly at a four-horse drag, with Miss Bra-

bazon in her now well-known top-coat, sitting on the box holding the reins; and the two girls Patty Clark and Nancy Green in their peculiar livery, standing before the leaders. The colours of the candidate were streaming in every direction, and large placards had been pasted on the panels, bearing the inscription, "VOTE FOR CALVERLEY."

"Good morning, Captain!" cried the fair charioteer, looking as cool as if she had driven four-in-hand all her life. "No time to spare—jump up—the box-seat here is reserved for you. Now, gentlemen, if you please."

Taking the affair as a capital joke, the Captain laughingly sprung up beside the lady; some of his committee got inside the carriage, the rest ascended to the roof; the fair charioteer smacked her long whip, the leaders sprang forward, the female grooms ran and clambered to the back-seat, and, well cheered by the amazed domestics, the team went trotting along the carriage-drive.

Presently they were in the highroad passing through the village. Every cottager turned out as

the vehicle approached. From the schools the inmates rushed like bees from a hive, all hurrahing at the top of their shrill trebles; and at the Vicarage door stood the Reverend Basil Plynymmon and his thin curate.

Miss Brabazon nodded at her clerical friend. She laughed as she noticed his look of virtuous horror when he recognised her, and observed her occupation. Indeed he was so shocked that he forgot to return the courteous salute of her companion on the box; and was equally regardless of the somewhat equivocal hails of several of the passengers. Nevertheless the fair charioteer chirruped to her team, and continued her lively remarks to her friends, as if her clerical friend's virtuous horror had not affected her in the very slightest degree.

Arthur enjoyed a very pleasant ride. The face of Lucretia Brabazon was, he could not help admitting, rather homely; but her cleverness, her coolness, her vivacious conversation, amused him extremely. She seemed thoroughly at home in every subject; and in repartee her resources

seemed boundless. Only once, and for a very short time, she reverted to India ; it was simply to make a reference to "Cousin Potter," from whom it appeared she had recently received intelligence of his having entered the military service of one of the native Princes.

The members of the Committee also enjoyed a very pleasant ride ; those on the roof shouting down jokes to their friends inside, and the more jocose of the latter leaning out of the window to return the jests that were showered upon them by the outsiders. Much to their credit, none of them attempted to joke with the occupants of the back seat. Whether the intense gravity of the girls' countenances discouraged familiarity, or the knowledge that their mistress had horsewhipped, on the racecourse, a certain betting-man who had addressed an improper observation to her, made them keep a guard upon their conduct, I cannot say with certainty. I confine myself to a simple statement of the fact.

All went merry as a marriage-bell till the



equipage entered the suburbs of the little market-town that enjoyed the privilege of returning one member to the Parliament of the United Kingdom ; and it then became evident that the inhabitants amazingly appreciated this privilege. Flags were waving from many of the windows ; there was a prodigious display of flowers and evergreens ; in all the conspicuous places there was the placard of the candidate ; and the people standing at the doorways wore his colours. There was much waving of caps and handkerchiefs ; there was a constant succession of cheers as the four-in-hand, with the gentlemen waving their hats from the roof and windows, came rattling over the stones of the High Street. But when Patty Clark suddenly produced a cornet-à-piston, and begun to play "Rule Britannia" in a style that betrayed hard practice in the stable for a month at least, the people exhibited a *furor* that beggars description.

Under the triumphal-arches, beneath the banners, spread across the principal thoroughfare, and past the Town-Hall to the Committee-room in the

Rose and Crown Inn opposite, went the well-appointed team, skilfully handled by their accomplished driver; the candidate acknowledging his cordial reception in the approved fashion, while the charioteer and the musician, who might have claimed a large share of it, maintained an expression of countenance which indicated exclusive attention to their onerous duties.

A hustings had been erected in front of the Town-Hall, before which a considerable crowd had assembled, in the greatest possible good humour; for it was evident they were of but one way of thinking. When the popular candidate presented himself there was certainly a tremendous noise; but for all that, there never was a more peaceable election. There were speeches made by the proposer and seconder of Captain Calverley; but not a word of either was heard, the constituency being so impatient to hear him alone.

In due course he advanced to the front; and then there was such an uproar of gratulation that

for some time his address, cultivated in the very best school of Calverley eloquence, was inaudible to his audience. A tall handsome man could be seen in an oratorical attitude; they knew that he was nearly related to my Lord Madras, and the late Bishop of the diocese; that he was the younger brother of Sir Calverley Calverley; that he was supported by the Lord-Lieutenant, and was the friend of the Squire; and, in consequence, were so eager to accept his professions, that they vociferously applauded every sentence before it had been half expressed.

No one venturing to name another candidate, there came the official announcement of Arthur Calverley, Esquire, being duly elected a Member of Parliament, to represent the free and enlightened electors of that important borough. Of course he returned thanks for the honour conferred upon him; but again the applause anticipated the gratitude. The representative was at last permitted to retire from his frantic supporters, to receive the congratulations of the numerous influential per-

sonages on the hustings who had been induced to attend there to tender him their support.

While engaged in a round of hand-shaking, the attention of the newly-made M.P. was directed to the popular demand for his immediate "chairing." Arrangements were therefore at once entered into for a procession, and, headed by the town band in open carriages, with Union Jack's and evergreens, his principal supporters on horse-back and in vehicles of various descriptions, with abundance of rosettes, they all filed slowly through the crowded streets, the source of universal interest, Miss Brabazon's four-in-hand last of all.

Captain Calverley, M.P., stood up, with his hand on his heart, bowing to the energetic ladies at the balconies, looking quite as amiable as a successful candidate ought to look when undergoing this popular ovation; the members of his committee, in ecstasies, bare-headed, making extraordinary attempts to sing to the air Patty Clarke was playing with such solemn earnest-

ness; but as they did not know the words, and from the uproar going on from the neighbouring windows and house-tops, could only hear occasional snatches of the tune, it soon became any thing but a successful performance. Nevertheless the musician went on, and though sometimes she could not avoid varying the repetition with a bar or two of the only other tune she had studied, her lapses were safe from discovery. "Rule Britannia" and "See the conquering hero" were alike to the noisy constituency. They only seemed able to realise the fact that they had elected their favourite, and to be conscious of the novelty of a female performer on the cornet-à-piston.

Sweet as this success may have been, it was a special relief to the member and his personal friends when the ceremony was over, and they found themselves in the long room of the Rose and Crown, where a cold collation awaited them. Though rather tired, they were still very merry, talking loudly, and laughing louder, about the incidents of the day. Tom Holyoake, who had

been looking through the window at the crowd still straggling in groups about the market-place, interchanging jocose remarks with Sir Harry Chester, suddenly uttered an exclamation of surprise.

"That chap must be a foreigner!" he cried; "and what a queer trap! Look at his black servant at the back, in his glazed hat, plush breeches, green coat, and red waistcoat. What a figure of fun! Look, Sir Harry."

The ex-dragoon brought his aquiline nose close to the panes, and observed a sallow-complexioned man, in a cut-away coat and broad-brimmed wide-awake, about to drive off in a dog-cart, at the back of which a negro footman was seated, holding on to the sides, as if to prepare for a jerk.

"'Pon my life—yes—no! but it must be. Yes; it's the very man!" cried Sir Harry, excitedly.

"What man?" inquired the other.

"Why, the fellow I saw last week," replied the ex-dragoon. "He was proprietor of an ex-

hibition at Donnington, that created a tremendous sensation. Did, 'pon my life!"

"Did it though? What was it?"

"The pig-faced Lady!"

"*The pig-faced Lady!*" repeated Tom Holyoake, in tones of extreme astonishment. "But he's saying 'Good-by' to the landlord: now he's driving off. How that poor devil of a nigger clings to his seat! For all the world, like a monkey on an uneasy perch! Never saw a black fellow look so pitiable."

The gentlemen were summoned to take their seats at the table. Miss Brabazon having been voted into the chair, with the young Marquis as vice-chairman, and the newly-elected M.P. in the place of honour at her right hand, the weary Committee-men were presently busily engaged in carving and eating the substantial meal which the landlord of the Rose and Crown had provided for them. He was even more substantial than his joints;—a large-faced, fat-headed old fellow, who had not been able to see his knees for a score of

years at least; but though he suffered much from shortness of breath, he insisted on waiting upon his distinguished guests.

Talking went on as briskly as the general mas-tication would allow: now and then a burst of mirth, recognising the point in some amusing remark from the fair president or her youthful vice. As the appetite got satisfied, the conversation became more general; and the usual current of pleasant gossip, enlivened occasionally with a bet, flowed round the table.

“Have you seen the *Delamere Guardian*?” inquired Lord Vernon of his opposite neighbour, Jacob Cobb, who, though a pig in the opinion of his Vicar, was pretty sure of finding a place much better than a sty in all county gatherings.

“No, my lord. I shall get it to-morrow. I don’t think it’s published before.”

“I wanted to know,” added his lordship, “if I was likely to find there an account of a rather clever hoax which I have heard was practised, for some time successfully, at a town some fifty miles off.”



"Clever hoax, eh! What was it, my lord?"

Jacob Cobb glanced at the innkeeper, who he knew liked a good story, and the smirk on the man's pudding-face showed that his attention had been attracted to the announcement.

"Well, you see, Cobb, the fellow had an exhibition which took immensely. Thousands flocked to see it, and proclaimed it the greatest wonder in the living world. It was what naturalists call a *lusus naturæ*, a kind of miracle in natural history."

"What in the world could it have been, my lord?"

The fat innkeeper appeared to listen with profound attention.

"Well, they called it 'The pig-faced Lady.'"

Sir Harry Chester and Tom Holyoake were now listening as intently, but not quite so anxiously, as the landlord.

"But," continued the speaker, "a spirited young doctor publicly denounced the thing as a cheat, and proved it to be nothing more than a bear clothed in female apparel, whose head had

been shaved. The showman bolted with his exhibition, and got clear off."

"O Lord, I'm ruined! I've been swindled!" cried the innkeeper, his complexion turning deadly pale. "I've been cheated and robbed by that rascal. Here, James! John! Thomas!"

He ran out of the room calling to his waiters, exciting much more amusement from some of his guests than sympathy, for, on inquiry, it was ascertained that he had been induced to accept this attractive investment as a short cut to fortune, giving a horse and dog-cart, besides a considerable sum in ready-money for the *lusus naturæ*, intending to exhibit her at the approaching races.

The incident became the subject of general conversation, and there was much speculation about the clever cheat. That he was the foreigner with the black servant there could be no doubt; but nothing seemed to be known respecting him. Arthur Calverley had seen him talking to the landlord, and thought he could identify him; but satisfied himself by recommending immediate pursuit.

By degrees the excitement caused by the swindle having been brought so close to them subsided among the company: the usual healths were drunk, and the customary speeches made; the forthcoming races were discussed; Miss Brabazon booked a good many bets; in short, not only were the victim and his victimiser as completely forgotten as if they had never existed, but the hero of the day, the newly-elected member for the borough, had the mortification to find himself, even among the members of his own committee, an object of secondary importance compared with those promising young horses "Tippetywitchet" and "Pot-8-o's."

In the evening, when in the privacy of his chamber, having arranged for his return to town on the following day, Arthur had time to reflect on the improvement in his prospects caused by his entrance into Parliament. With all the confidence of a Calverley he felt assured that he should make a figure there. He had no doubt that his claims on the Government would be pushed by Lord Madras; indeed, by all the Calverley

interest, and then there was the Squire, and through him the Duke. It was a powerful combination, and might lead to almost any thing.

Lastly, the new member thought of the Squire's daughter. As he smoked a cheroot in the easy-chair, he rapidly sketched out his plan of operations to bring his affairs in that quarter to a satisfactory conclusion. He would resume the singing; that German love-song he must have again. He remembered the stolen caress; if another such opportunity presented itself he should make a declaration. Madras expected this; and he must not disappoint Madras if he could help it. The Bishop's widow absolutely looked upon it as an accomplished fact.

Besides he could not help acknowledging that, all things considered, he could not do better than marry Fanny Scudamore. She really was very handsome, and had been most tender and affectionate in her manner towards him. Her father evidently wished it, and hence his great desire to advance his interests. So it was settled.

At this moment his glance fell upon a letter addressed to him, which had been placed on the dressing-table. He opened it. It was from his young comrade. He did not take much interest in its contents till he came to the following passage :

“ Old Porchester, after philandering with my cousin and sister, at last allowed money to influence his decision, and has married the heiress. We were all at the wedding. Geraldine as bridesmaid, and I as best man, and a precious slow affair I found it, I can tell you. I can't express how surprised I am about Fanny. It passes a fellow's comprehension to make out *some* girls.”

The Captain was as much astonished as the Cornet, and equally disappointed. He was quite at a loss what to say now to his well-married relations on this change in his prospects. He could not account for it. Could Jack Scudamore's daughter be nothing better than a flirt? And their singing such marvellously tender love-songs together! Could they mean nothing?

The handsome cavalry officer felt himself non-

suited; but how his cause had so completely failed he had not the most remote idea. Surely the matrimonial luck of the Calverleys was not leaving them?

Vexatious as the affair was, he found consolation in the fact that he had *not* proposed, and therefore had not been refused. He would not think Fanny a coquette; nevertheless her behaviour was inexplicable.

When he returned to town he would learn all about it from her cousin.

As he thought of Geraldine, the image of her girlish beauty filled his mind with a sense of freshness to which he had long been a stranger. He could not help confessing that she had grown very lovely; he could not help feeling that there was something in her ingenuous nature which held an unaccountable influence over him when he thought of her. She seemed to have some mysterious claim upon his attention.

He resolved to see more of her. It should not be long before he would find his way to the Chis-

wick Cottage, and learn from her every thing about this queer marriage. He did not like it, and professed his inability to comprehend its meaning.

At last, having smoked out his cigar, he threw the end into the grate and began to undress, with an indistinct idea in his mind that, notwithstanding his success in his election, his love-making had been a failure.

## CHAPTER IX.

### FIRST LOVE.

GERALDINE found almost insurmountable difficulty in reconciling herself to her separation from her affectionate companion. The intelligence of the marriage astounded her. She had, after a struggle, the severity of which no one knew but herself, brought her mind to a tolerably calm state of resignation to another union for her, when, in the confidential tête-à-tête shared by her and Fanny, when Fanny came to her, she was informed of the Duke's proposal.

She was too much surprised to have heard the fair fiancée, who had been so long monial prospects, and who had been so long dered by the unpopularity of the Duke's ableness of the Duke's proposal.



warm invitation to be her bridesmaid was repeated more emphatically, that she seemed to wake up to something like consciousness of the fact.

Of course she could not refuse; and when asked reproachfully why she did not wish her friend joy, Geraldine did so with a tumultuous agitation of feeling that betrayed the uncertainty of her thoughts as regarded the nature of the contingency represented to her as joyful. Fanny rewarded her with one of the fond caresses she had used to bestow in her assumed maternal character, and continued to talk in the highest spirits about the necessary arrangements for her wedding.

Though the prayers were said that night rather hurriedly, the final benediction was repeated with increased fervour. It was acknowledged by a passionate embrace that created an hysterical sensation Geraldine had great difficulty in suppressing.

Neither of them slept much that night. Geraldine kept awake wondering; Fanny closed her eyes and lay motionless, but only to deceive her

loving bedfellow. She had much to think of, and more not to think of. Not a word had been said by either about Arthur; both had seemed with a like caution to refrain from any expression capable of suggesting his name.

This reticence continued during the whole of the interval before the wedding-day. Geraldine, after the ceremony, in which she shared as if she were moving in a trance, took leave of the dear friend of her childhood. She exerted herself bravely not to betray her sense of the irreparable loss she had to sustain; and was encouraged by the bride's high spirits; abundance of caresses, and the warmest invitations to come to her directly she returned from her bridal tour. Presently she beheld the Duchess step into her travelling-carriage. The Duke was quickly by her side, the postillions smacked their whips, the horses started; and the next minute the handsome equipage, with bride and bridegroom, was out of sight.

But very far from out of mind. At least one of them had too firm a hold on the affectionate

girl's remembrance to be so easily disposed of. Geraldine in her loneliness felt as if she had lost a material part of her identity—of her existence. They had lived together in mutual dependence, and the younger was quite unprepared for a separation. But it was not till she had retired for the night to the chamber they had so often shared, and Geraldine regarded one by one the numerous memorials of their happy life, that she fully realised the dissolution of that happiness.

The threatened loss of the object of her long devotion had not affected her so deeply, because there the bane brought its antidote in the assurance that Fanny loved Arthur, and could not fail of being very happy with him. Was she likely to be as happy with the Duke? was her frequent question. She could never frame a satisfactory answer to it.

Geraldine sighed heavily. She could not comprehend the meaning of the sudden abandonment of so attractive a lover as Captain Calverley for so venerable a husband as the Duke of Porchester.

FIRST LOVE.

Neither duke, nor prince, no not emperor, have induced her to give up Arthur. What the affair more perplexing was her friend's thorough disinterestedness.

At last dawned upon her consciousness that she had no longer should be at liberty to realize her dreams and enjoy her hopes of a future if no cloud had ever shadowed her young heart again surmounted by those impetuous impulses that had rendered her so beautiful. She might incur the blame of being miserable. So she was replaced in the arms of her shipper for so long a time.

She associated with him, and in the end, he was reformed in his manners, and as earnestly as before, his being a perfect gentleman.

seeing him often? Would he be able to call at Rose Lawn soon after his return to town to see grandmamma, who was so partial to him? Would he come in time for the archery-fête? Would he ask permission to accompany her? Oh, how very nice it would be to have dear Arthur for her escort all to herself! what a delightful archery-fête that would be! what a happy day to think of ever after!

One day, while in her own room engaged in these pleasant speculations, the little parlour-maid brought her the gratifying intelligence that Captain Calverley was in the drawing-room with her grandmother, as she had learned to call the Countess from her cousin. In a flutter of exquisite excitement Geraldine proceeded to make certain improvements in her toilette, all the time thinking how good it was of him to come so soon all the way to Chiswick to visit dear grandmamma; wondering if he would be glad to see herself; wondering what he would say about Fanny's marriage; and wondering on a hundred other equally interesting topics I cannot even name, as I am obliged to leave this

dear affectionate nature to give some little attention to the idol it so fervently worshipped.

The new Member for Delamere had his own particular reasons for hurrying to Rose Lawn. I have already intimated as much; so he barely allowed himself time to take the oaths and his seat in the assembled Commons of England before he was seen in a well-appointed cabriolet, driving a high-stepping horse along the Hammersmith Road.

He found the dowager alone, not only in her own seat by the window, but with scarcely a perceptible alteration in her appearance. As soon as she was made aware of his presence, she was as glad and garrulous as he could have desired to find her. Nothing had been changed in the apartment. The full-length of the departed Lord-Chamberlain remained over the chair of his venerable relict; and the old-fashioned marqueterie, the gilt eagles, and carved swans were exactly where he had left them.

He had hardly sat down before the stream of her reminiscences began to flow.

"I was just thinking of my first journey to Weymouth with the sweet Queen and the darling Princesses," observed the Countess, taking a pinch of snuff with spasmodic energy. "I was one of the maids of honour, you know, and about the age of my granddaughter. It's a good marriage for her, isn't it?"

Captain Calverley was rather taken aback by the sudden question; but was evidently not expected to reply.

"The court were accommodated in a large house opposite the sea," she continued, "and a very charming party we were; for the dear good King was always pleasant at Weymouth. Not but what his most gracious majesty was pleasant every where; but when he found himself in his favourite watering-place, he really seemed as if he couldn't be happy unless he made every body happy around him. And the sweet Queen was happy, of course; and the darling Princesses every one of them. And my dear lord was happy, though he was not my lord then. *I* was very happy, for all the court

paid me marked attention ; and I am sure I might have married a duke like my granddaughter, who is really very lucky to make so good a match. Not but what she thoroughly deserves it : she's worthy to be an empress, as his most gracious majesty observed when he congratulated me on my receiving an offer of marriage from my dear lord. But that was not at Weymouth ; for I had been maid-of-honour three years before he proposed, though he paid me particular attentions long before that, of which the whole court took notice. Indeed, the dear good King joked him on his attentions. His most gracious majesty made every body laugh one day when he said—"

Arthur had been too used to the abrupt breaks in the current to exhibit any thing like surprise when he noticed the usual bewildered look as the speaker stopped.

"You were referring to the marriage of your grand-daughter, Countess," he said as loud as he could ; for that was the subject on which he wished her to dilate.



“Ah, yes, the darling Princess Royal. I remember it all now. Her royal highness wore a spangled muslin-frock over a satin-slip; and her head was dressed the night before, which made it necessary that she should not go to bed. And I sat up with her all night, playing at ombre to keep her awake; but when the dresser came, she found us both fast asleep on the floor, with our beautiful tall head-dresses crushed and rumpled so badly that they had to be done over again before we could be considered fit to present ourselves. I thought the sweet Queen would have been vexed with me for my carelessness; but, on learning the cause of the darling Princess Royal being so late, her most gracious majesty good-humouredly observed—”

Here the door opened, and so graceful a vision presented itself in the person of the brightly-blushing Geraldine, that he, gallant captain though he was, became totally oblivious of his old friend's court-anecdote, and hurried towards her grand-niece with so much genuine pleasure in his coun-

tenance, that the delighted girl wanted nothing more to convince her loving heart that he was glad to see her.

He led her to a chair near her relative, and experienced a gratification quite new to him as he took the hand that was timidly placed in his own. The dowager presently resumed her gossip; but perhaps it became more incoherent than usual, or was more frequently broken into unintelligible fragments, for if asked, Arthur could not have given a rational description of what had been said to him. The real fact was, the happiness glowing in Geraldine's face made its beauty so impressive, that he could with difficulty refrain from testifying his admiration.

His ancient friend found her visitor singularly inattentive. At last the broken current stopped altogether, and Arthur was at liberty to converse with her youthful kinswoman.

Somewhat to Geraldine's surprise, he did not ask a single question about dear Fanny; his inquiries were after her brother and herself. They

speedily got into a stream of easy converse on subjects of local or temporary interest; in the course of which he ascertained the important fact of the archery-fête coming-off the next day. The Captain was going there of course,—every body would be there.

Arthur made rather a long visit of it. Though he knew that he ought to be in the House of Commons by a certain hour, he delayed his *adieux* till all chance of getting there in that time had become impossible. He did, however, at last summon up resolution to rise and shake hands with his venerable hostess; and with a great deal more fervour, with her charming relative; then hurried away, and jumped into his cab, wondering how he could have been so stupid as to have overlooked, or at least not to have sufficiently admired, “that exquisitely lovely girl.”

Of what the young senator did in that night's debate, unfortunately there is no record. What he did when he came home to his comfortable lodgings in the Albany after it was over, I

am equally at a loss for reliable evidence to show; but the next morning, when escorting the happy Geraldine in the grounds of the beautiful villa to which she had been invited, there was nothing in his appearance to prove that his parliamentary or his domestic duties had been very heavy.

Geraldine was realising one of her happy day-dreams; the object of such intense hero-worship was devoting his entire attention to her, and so attentive was he that he not unfrequently drew towards his companion more notice than she desired. They were pointed out as the handsomest couple that had ever been seen in those grounds. They *must* be lovers.

Their conversation was chiefly about the flowers, the scenery, the balmy air, the bright sky over head, and the clear stream flowing at their feet; about every thing except what each was thinking of—apparently insignificant commonplaces such as any two acquaintances of both sexes might interchange in any pleasant spot,

under any combination of pleasurable circumstances.

Arthur had no knowledge of his companion's feelings, and did not presume to penetrate her thoughts; he therefore considered that he had not the slightest right to interpret the innocent nothings of her conversation as having a significance that was for the heart rather than for the ear. He began, however, to perceive that his own nature was developing a new sense that his tongue as yet wanted the faculty to communicate.

They had been brought together as closely as life can be to death: the remembrance of this alone was an indissoluble link—at least to one of them it had always been so. Arthur, as he gazed admiringly on that singularly bright young face, felt for the first time the full appreciation of his timely rescue. He became conscious that it was an achievement to be proud of; and he was proud of it. Very proud, indeed, was the handsome cavalry-officer, as he looked upon those eloquent ingenuous features—the most eloquent of all, the

soft lustrous hazel orbs beaming up to meet his own, overflowing with the happiness that filled her guileless heart; and when he remembered the ghastly corpse he had seen through the glassy water, a feeling of inexpressible tenderness thrilled through his manly frame. He acknowledged to himself that he had gained a right to regard this beautiful young life as an integral part of his own.

They did not join the archers; but after wandering about the grounds, interchanging pleasant thoughts and still more pleasurable impressions, they sat down to rest upon a mossy bank screened by flowering shrubs, where from time to time a burst of joyous exclamations was wafted towards them as a cheerful chorus to the touching drama their souls were then enacting.

So deeply was this interview impressed upon Arthur Calverley, that in many an after hour of mingled anxiety and dread he could recal every musical inflection of Geraldine's voice, every charm that assisted in producing her eminently

graceful appearance, every expression that ministered to the beauty of that exquisite face, as they sat together under the sweet shelter of the lilacs and laburnums, associated in that paradise of youth that is illumined by the golden sunrise of first love.

## CHAPTER X.

### PATRONAGE.

ABOUT a month after Arthur Calverley's return to town, he received this note from the Squire :

*" Hertford Street, May Fair.*

" MY DEAR FRIEND,—Never was a horse ridden so hard. Had I been a three-year old they could not have entered me for so many races. By George, sir, it seems to me there isn't a cup to be run for in the country, or a sweepstakes, or a handicap, or a match of any sort, for which I am not down. I would not have cared when I was in my prime, and when my blood and bone made me an Eclipse in my way, capable of distancing every thing that came on the course with me.



"Now the high-mettled racer has run himself off his legs. It's a thousand to one against him, and no takers. He's aged, he's stiff, he's lame, he's spavined, he's wind-galled, he can't see the winning-post, he hasn't wind enough left in him for a canter.

"Pray come and see what you can do to get him scratched, so that, freed from these innumerable engagements, the poor old horse may be permitted to return to his paddock, have his shoes taken off, and eat his remaining feeds in peace.

"Yours truly,

"JACK SCUDAMORE.

"P.S. Fanny has just left me. She is quitting town for the castle, the Duke being out of order. I hope, however, there's nothing much amiss with him. I'm quite alone in this big place, except Dawkins and the old hounds."

Arthur hastened to Hertford Street, and, as the door opened, beheld the bullet-head of the

superannuated first whip, his well-tanned and freckled face wearing a most lugubrious aspect, while his thin gaitered legs, more than usually bowed, seemed scarcely able to sustain his light weight.

“I be main glad to see you, sur,” he said in a whisper;—“they be a baiting the poor Squire to death; they be a worrying on him like a pack o’ martins, polecats, weasels, stoats, and other varmin. I be terrible tired myself, sur, only a opening of the door and answering of their questions.”

He pointed with his thumb mysteriously over his shoulder. Arthur did not quite comprehend the nature of the evil, and looked as if he wanted information.

“All comes of being in Parliament, sur,” added Dawkins. “As long as the Squire remained at the Court, a doing of what he were fit for, nothing troubled him, or any on us; but since he were persuaded to represent the county and come to live here in Lunnon, where he can’t

do what he ha' been used to all his life, a badger in the open, wi' a dozen dogs at his throat and a spear-point within a inch o' his ribs, have a better chance of making hisself comfortable."

As the Captain passed the parlours, the doors being open, he could see that they were crowded with people of both sexes, wearing that anxious expectant physiognomy which distinguishes applicants for favour. He had become familiar with such faces in the ante-rooms of leading members of the Government; he had never made a morning call on the Duke of Porchester without finding a throng of them waiting his leisure.

Arthur passed into the drawing-room, where he found his friend reclining in an easy-chair, beside a large table covered with newspapers, pamphlets, parliamentary reports, blue-books, and heaped up with letters. A waste-basket was before him, crammed with printed and written papers of every description. His florid complexion had contracted a bilious tinge; his cheerful, cordial expression had been superseded by

one of vexation and disgust. In place of the neatness which had invariably distinguished his dress, it was slovenly, soiled, and rumpled, giving the idea of late revelling and a bad night's rest under the table.

As soon as Jack Scudamore recognised his visitor, his features were lit up with something like their old animation. He pitched a book he had in his hand on to the floor, which was well littered with newspapers, envelopes, and prospectuses, and held out his hand.

"Welcome as a thaw after a long frost!" he exclaimed, with his familiar cheeriness of manner. "Never had a master of hounds such a stiff line of country. Bull-finches rise before me at every step; and I've no more jump left in my limbs than can be found in a dead frog."

Arthur sat down beside his friend, and requested to know in what manner he could help him out of his difficulties.

"By George, I've been run too hard!" he cried, with his customary emphasis. "I can't

go the pace; I ain't able to get across such a terrible line of country as one meets with in the political hunt. It's all easy enough to ride to cover; and when some Towser in the ministerial pack gives tongue, I can go with the field pretty well; but then I get bogged in committees."

The young member ventured to ask for an explanation.

"Why, you see, Captain," he said, hesitatingly, "I find I don't know where I'm going. I raise myself in my stirrups under the belief that there's something in my way, and I'm to take a leap; but somehow or other, when serving on those committees, I'm constantly finding myself a-sinking, as it were. The ground seems a quagmire; I stumble, I flounder; and an unpleasant impression takes possession of me that I am going out of my depth, and about to come to grief."

It became clear to Arthur that the new county member felt himself unqualified for the duties he was called upon to fulfil. They were a tax not

only upon his time and his patience, but upon his understanding; for besides being totally unacquainted with the business of the House, many of the subjects under inquiry were very imperfectly known to him.

“In any thing about the breeding of horses,” he added, “I should be forward enough; or as to the rearing and management of hounds; or I could give tongue concerning sport of almost any sort; moreover, I’m up to a thing or two about land and farming, and such matters. But what on earth do I know respecting treaties with foreign powers, the cultivation of the fine-arts, prison-discipline, commercial reciprocity, and a score of other things that are constantly being brought under the notice of a committee of inquiry? By Jove, sir, I sometimes know no more what the witnesses are talking of than if they were explaining in Hebrew!”

Arthur endeavoured to reconcile the old fox-hunter to his ignorance by giving him to understand that his was far from being a solitary case.

Country gentlemen in general, on entering Parliament, he assured his friend, find that they have a good deal to learn ; nevertheless, they contrive to make respectable legislators.

The Squire did not seem to care for this distinction. "I would rather a thousand times be where I feel myself a good deal more at home," he replied ; "where I know every inch of the ground ; where I am my own master, can do as I like, and say what I like, without caring what any body thinks of it. Now, what do you think happened, only a day or two ago, in a debate on what was called an extension of the suffrage?"

His visitor had not heard, and requested to be informed.

"There was a radical chap, sir," he continued, "ventured to abuse landed proprietors for tyranny to their labourers, grinding the poor, and a hundred other oppressions. At last I couldn't stand it any longer, and got up and told him that had I heard him tell such a pack of lies, when I was a

younger man, I would have sent him head-over-heels into the nearest ditch. By George," cried the speaker in indignant surprise, "there was immediately a commotion such as might have been raised had Guy Fawkes been discovered amongst them, sitting on a barrel of gunpowder. You will hardly believe it, but I was called to order, and told that I had used unparliamentary language. By Jove, I was!"

Arthur endeavoured to look a good deal more astonished than he felt.

"As a master of hounds, you know," he added in a confidential tone, "one is obliged to be somewhat sharp upon fellows who will ride into the pack, or do some other mischief: and it's of no more use crying, 'Ware hounds!' to such awkward fools than doing nothing at all. I remember once I was riding Tom Jones, out of the Queen of Sheba by Malbrook, whose sire, you know, was the Flying Dutchman. I was out cub-hunting, and had come to a check; the pack were diligently striving to recover the scent in a patch of



gorse and fern close to a low quickset, when a man, whose horse seemed to have run away with him, suddenly bounded over the enclosure, and the next minute my hounds were scattered, two or three howling with pain. I rode up to him in a terrible rage. I don't quite remember what I said, but I know that I was far from being choice in my language. I called him a tinker, a tailor, a cockney, and a snob; and declared that it was impossible to decide which was the most worthless brute of the two, himself or his horse. I should certainly have knocked him out of his saddle as a climax to my impressive address, only I recognised him as the son of one of my tenants: but he got such a jobation as completely prevented his again joining the hunt. Now I should have liked," added the veteran sportsman emphatically, "to have heard any body, while I was double-thonging that fellow with my tongue, cry out that I was out of order, and was using unparliamentary language. That *would* have been a joke, wouldn't it?"

He burst out into his cheery laugh with a heartiness that showed he had quite forgot his more recent vexations.

Arthur joined in his mirth, and then directed his attention to the heap of correspondence, open and unopen, and the packets of various kinds upon the table.

“I gave up the task of making myself acquainted with the intentions of my innumerable correspondents, in sheer despair,” the Squire said. “At first, I put aside the civil communications that seemed to require answers: but when I ascertained that I had been appointed steward to five-and-twenty public dinners; that I had been selected to fill the chair at a dozen charitable anniversaries; that I had been promoted to the post of director of forty joint-stock companies; that I was invited to become vice-patron of at least a score of hospitals and infirmaries; and that my known liberality and benevolence were appealed to on behalf of more than a hundred interesting young widows with large families,—

I stopped short, appalled by the magnitude of the obligations thus thrust upon me."

His visitor was no stranger to the persecutions which a person of great wealth or influence is subject to on his arrival in the metropolis; and addressed himself to an examination of the prodigious accumulation of them that had fallen to his warm-hearted friend, with very little ceremony.

"I remember hearing of an Irishman," said Jack Scudamore, with all his old social pleasantries, "who confessed that he couldn't be in two places at once, unless he were a bird; but my friends here evidently attribute to me still more miraculous powers of wing; they expect me to be in at least a dozen places at once. I'm to be at the London Tavern and Exeter Hall, the Crown and Anchor, the Albion, and Willis's Rooms—even at Greenwich and Richmond—at the same hour; and the demands on my digestion are as extravagant as those on my purse, for I am to eat a dinner prepared for the friends of the Indigent Blind, while partaking of banquets as liberally arranged for the

patrons of Superannuated Printers'-devils, of Invalidated Crossing-sweepers, of Distressed Barmaids, of Reformed Burglars, of the Institution for the Cure of Diseases of the Great Toe-joint, of the Society for encouraging Industrious Servant-girls, of the Refuge for lost Lap-dogs, of the National Costermongers' Athenæum of the Arts and Sciences, of the Royal Association for transporting the Jews from Duke's Place to Jerusalem, of the Mission to convert the followers of Mumbo-Jumbo, of the Universal United Samaritans for providing the poor Climbing-boys with Soap and Water, of the Imperial Philanthropic Institute for erecting Model Lodging-houses for Tramps and Cadgers—

“By Jove, I haven't half exhausted my list!” exclaimed the county representative, as his friend interrupted him with a burst of laughter he could no longer restrain.

Arthur was soon occupied creating a goodly pile of rejected addresses; for he found that the name of charity had been abused to the full ex-

tent he had just heard described. While busy at his work, the Squire threw himself back in his chair with a heavy sigh.

“Ah!” thought his young friend, “this sort of life does not suit you at all, honest Jack Scudamore. You are hankering after a return to the joyous scenes in which your soul delighted : the excitement of adventure in the hunting-field ; the stirring chorus of hounds in full cry ; the gladdening hail of old friends ; and the enlivening emulation of the best horses in Cheshire. Even the pleasant society of canine favourites, interrupted by interesting reports from the stable and kennel, or the cheerful gossip of ancient companions in the field, when unable to make his appearance at the cover-side, were a thousand times more congenial to your nature than the close confinement, studious application, and endless bother inseparable from the existence of a public career such as your misjudging admirers have selected for you.”

While throwing aside appeal after appeal to Mr. Scudamore's well-known liberality, the extem-

porised secretary kept glancing at the fine healthy, happy countenance that had diffused so large a share of social enjoyment in the home-circle. He was painfully struck by the change it had undergone. It had not only become aged, but was impressed with an expression of profound anxiety.

“Did I tell you that Fanny called?” he inquired suddenly. “The Duchess, you know. She was here yesterday to say good-by. I’m afraid my old friend the Duke is in a bad way. A sudden seizure, I’ve been told, which has left him quite unconscious. Poor dear Duke, I shall miss him very much; he has always been to me as a brother, and I have found him still more kind and affectionate as a son.”

There was a slight pause.

“My darling bears up bravely,” he continued in a less steady voice; “but I noticed that tears were in her eyes, and she looked very different to what she used to do. Though every one assured me how brilliant her life was after her marriage,

somehow or other she never seemed so happy as she had been before."

The gallant Captain recalled her bright presence, as it had appeared and re-appeared to him, as girl and woman, marvellously rich in feminine grace. He recalled scenes of affectionate tenderness he had witnessed in the well-remembered cottage at Chiswick, and the meeting between father and daughter he had beheld at the Hunt dinner. Then naturally followed his recollection of those passages that a certain German lyric had produced.

The grapes were *not* sour. He would readily have acknowledged their exquisite sweetness, though unable to comprehend why they had so suddenly been put out of his reach. There was a true manliness in his nature, that prevented his falling into the littlenesses of some lovers when they think they have been slighted; and the manner he heard her spoken of excited a genuine sympathy.

"I have missed her terribly," said the old

man. "When she left me, the whole sunshine of my life went with her. I thought it would be so proud a thing to see her a duchess; but I learnt that my ambition had been gratified at too heavy a cost. The hunting-field, the old house, the hounds, the horses, after she had ceased to associate herself with them, seemed in my eyes to lose nearly all the interest with which they had been regarded. By George, every thing I used to like so thoroughly began to grow wearisome; and then I knew that I had parted with the zest that had made my daily existence so very enjoyable."

The voice was growing tremulous. The secretary thought it time to stop his labour, and attempted a few words of consolation.

"Yes," replied the Squire, eagerly; "the belief that I had secured her happiness made me able to endure the loss of my own: but, by degrees, the conviction has been forced upon me—that—that"—he hesitated for a moment, then finished his sentence—"that I have made a sad mistake."



This was to Arthur a new and startling aspect of the case. He had always imagined that the marriage of Miss Scudamore with the Duke of Porchester — notwithstanding the difference in their ages, and other minor points of dissimilarity — was one of those unions into which girls are constantly entering of their free choice, induced thereto apparently by a desire to secure social elevation. His friend's concluding sentence intimated otherwise.

The interest he had never ceased to feel for her was very greatly increased as the idea presented itself that she had been the victim of her father's ambition, not her own; — that she had become a sacrifice at the altar of filial devotion, — a rare instance of such intense affection nowadays. His speculations in this direction, which had made him oblivious of the claims he had come to adjudicate, were presently checked.

"When the dear girl first came back to me," added the old man, his face lighting up again under the influence of that pleasant memory, "I

seemed to begin a new existence. It was the same with every living creature that beheld her smile, or heard her voice. When I took her to the kennel, the hounds were twice as glad to see me; and whether in paddock or in stall, there wasn't an animal I cared for that did not testify its delight at her presence. Every helper was ready to worship her when she mounted her horse; and however crowded the field at the meet, there wasn't a man there, young or old, who wouldn't have readily risked his life to have done her the most trifling service.

"But what's the use of harking back in this way?" he demanded, interrupting himself impatiently. "I've allowed myself to be thrown out of the hunt. I'm unhorsed, and must needs go afoot the safest way home; and all my own fault, by Jove! I ought to have set greater store by the blessings that were so bountifully showered upon me. My darling Fanny would have remained to fill my house with sunshine, if I had not, like a fool, induced her to leave it."

Here Dawkins entered, his freckled face looking scared, and evidently in a state of alarm and excitement.

"If I beant allowed to thong 'em a-bit, Squire, they'll be eating me alive presently."

He said this in a low voice as he came up to his master's chair.

"What's the matter now?"

"They're all a-yelping like mad!" was the reply. "They insists on seeing you, Squire; crying out again' the shame of keeping on 'em waiting. Some have been here two hours and more. Though I told 'em you was particklar engaged, and couldn't see nobody for ever so long, not one on 'em would budge. Not one on 'em will say what he comes for, but that his business is most private and particklar: indeed, there's a-most as many women as men amongst 'em, and they be the most impatient of the pack."

The Squire looked worried. It was plain that he wanted to escape the threatened interviews.

Arthur, much amused, returned to his examination of the correspondence.

"Are there any amongst them who are known to me?" asked the county member.

"Not a soul; but I managed to larn as they all hopes to get summut out o' you,—government appointments, places, pensions, and the like. They dwells a good deal on your having the Dook as your son-in-law."

"I think this will put an end to the nuisance for the present, at any rate," said Arthur, as he tossed a note he had just opened across the table. It was a short official letter announcing the dissolution of Parliament in the course of that day.

No sooner had the old fox-hunter cast his eye over it than he jumped up and waved it over his head with all the enthusiasm of a school-boy receiving the news of an unexpected holiday.

"Hurra!" he cried in boisterous exultation. "Don't open any more letters! Let the people down-stairs know at once that I have nothing to

do with patronage; and get every thing ready for an immediate return home."

The ex-whipper-in hurried away, well pleased to obey the orders he had received; but they appeared far from agreeable to the company in the parlour. Some of them expressed their disappointment in loud and angry tones; indeed Dawkins presently came back, stating that a clergyman, who had come to solicit subscriptions for runaway slaves from the Southern States of America, would not leave the place till he had had the pleasure of an interview with that enlightened friend of liberty, the great and good Mr. Scudamore.

The Squire's warm heart melted at this appeal, and he gave directions to show the reverend gentleman up-stairs. Presently there entered the room a gaunt figure clothed in seedy black, with a dirty-white neckcloth, followed by a negro in an old long-waisted dress-coat with gilt-buttons, plaid trousers, red waistcoat, and boots worn very much down at heel.

"Servant, Squire!" said the former, advancing with a solemn stride, and looking from Captain Calverley to Mr. Scudamore, as if in doubt which he ought to address.

"You see, I'm a minister in New England, and a stump-orator on the abolition platform. I go the whole hog—I do—on that sublime question; for there's nothing hatefuller than slavery to all free and enlightened natures. And knowing as them is your sentiments, Squire," and again he glanced from the younger to the elder gentleman he was addressing, "I have called to inform you that I have been sent on a mission from the great American people, which abhors the domestic institution, to the British friends of this cause of men and angels, to solicit contributions to a fund for runaway slaves; of which this here nigger is one as skedaddled from the South last fall. Didn't you, uncle Tom?"

"Yes, massa," cried the other very readily, glancing his yellow eyeballs in the direction of the two gentlemen.

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The Squire had such a hatred of slavery that nothing could afford him greater pleasure than an opportunity of helping to put it down ; and he at once looked about for his cheque-book, with the object of giving a liberal subscription. In the mean time, Captain Calverley had been closely scrutinising the features of the American clergyman and his *protégé*. Neither face was particularly interesting ; but he continued to gaze, as he had an impression that he had seen them before.

“Have you been long in this country ?” he asked.

“I crossed the Atlantic only last week,” was the reply. “By the favour of Divine Providence, we had a fine passage ; and when I heard as among all the Britishers there weren’t one in philanthropy as was equal to the illustrious senator Squire Scudamore, I thought my honourable mission couldn’t prosper till I had enjoyed the privilege of seeking his enlightened coöperation.”

“Your name, sir.”

“The Reverend Jabez Jowler, of Salem Cha-

pel, Philadelphia, with the abounding grace of the Lord."

The Squire had found his cheque-book, and had commenced filling-up a draft; much apparently to the satisfaction of the pious applicant, for he began to watch the operation with a beaming interest that seemed quite to illumine his sunken cheeks and sallow physiognomy. The next question changed the expression completely.

"How did you come to be at Delamere a month ago, if you only arrived in England last week?"

The Squire stopped writing, and looked inquiringly from the applicant to his questioner.

"That was rather a clever trick you played on the innkeeper there, Mr. Jowler," said the Captain.

"You have made a mistake, sir," replied the man, trying to look indifferent. "You Britishers often do, specially when you think of insulting a representative of the greatest nation on the face of God's universal earth."

"Oh, no, it's no mistake, Mr. Jowler. I re-



cognise that scar on your cheek which I noticed as you drove away in the dog-cart, after your successful swindle."

Mr. Scudamore closed his cheque-book, doubled up his fist, and stared indignantly at the detected scoundrel. The reverend gentleman looked at first as if about to gouge his audacious insulter; but at this moment Dawkins made his appearance, accompanied by two large fox-hounds, who began to sniff about the legs of himself and his dusky associate in a manner any thing but pleasant to either; the fellow saw, therefore, that the odds were against him for a fight; indeed the stalwart Squire and the dashing-looking young officer, as they now stood up, were alone more than a match for the two confederates in a fair conflict.

"Dawkins, show these rascals the door!" roared the Squire.

"Persecution is sweet to the innocent!" cried the assumed abolitionist meekly. "Come, uncle Tom, the poor slave arn't like to get much pity hereabouts."

The negro felt inclined to follow the strides of his master with even more celerity ; but the attention of the dogs, or rather his frightened inspection of their movements before and behind him, made speed impossible.

“ I shake the inhospitable dust off my feet as I leaves this almighty mean place,” exclaimed the pretended abolitionist loftily.

“ Take *that* to help you !” added Dawkins, and with his foot he gave the scoundrel an impulse in the rear that sent him into the gutter. The dogs thought this a signal for them, and took a snap at the black fellow’s legs, which he only avoided by making a bound that cleared the door-steps ; then he ran for his life.

## CHAPTER XI.

### AN ACCEPTED LOVER.

“YOU are quite sure that your dear mamma, had she lived, would have been satisfied with me as her daughter?”

This question was put to Arthur Calverley after he had ventured to declare his attachment; and in the confidence established by the acknowledgment that his affection was returned, he had fondly recalled his mother's ambitious wishes for him, and had, with a pardonable pride, dwelt on their perfect realisation.

For what qualification could the most exacting parent have demanded for her son's bride that was not to be found in his Geraldine? High birth? it was revealed in her look and manner. Beauty? when presented at court her preëminent

attractions had been universally acknowledged. Accomplishments? her mind had developed as favourably as her person.

Arthur was well aware that she had no fortune; but her advantages in other respects were so eminent, he not only felt that in gaining her as a wife he obtained an inestimable treasure, but was assured of the approval of the more influential members of his family; therefore, in his affectionate conferences with her, he had dwelt with much complacency on certain characteristic traits of his immediate connections that illustrated the desire of the Calverleys to marry well.

She listened with evident interest; but when he recalled the more pleasing reminiscences of his mother, her look became eloquent with womanly tenderness. After hearing him out, she asked the question with which this chapter commences.

His reply was not deficient either in ardour or sincerity. She smiled, and seemed perfectly content.

They sat together in the arbour on the lawn of

the Chiswick cottage, the moonlight playing upon the clumps of flowering shrubs around them, and making a broad silvery pathway over the silent river beyond,—for he had taken the opportunity that presented itself during one of his long and now somewhat frequent visits, while alone with her, of hazarding his declaration.

Lord Fitzmaurice was just then asleep on the dining-room sofa, and the growing feebleness of the dear old dowager kept her a prisoner in her chamber; the lovers therefore remained in perfect security from disturbance, partly engaged in arranging their future, partly, no less delightfully, occupied in recalling their past.

Could Arthur ever forget that delicious confession of her love he drew from her rosy lips, as her blushing face lay half hidden on his breast? It began its history with the incident that had brought them together, and he had to listen to the recital of her childish confidences about him with her affectionate cousin and playmate, not only when he was absent from England, but after the

intimacy had been renewed at the termination of the war. No one knew, she said, but dear Fanny, the state of her feelings, and it was with her co-operation that "Fitz" had been induced to seek a commission in the same regiment. After his reappearance at Rose Lawn, dear Fanny had encouraged her prepossession, and had always been ready to assist in bringing about their interviews.

Then she gently disengaged herself from his embrace, and repeated her question as to his mother's approval of her. There could be no doubt in the gallant Captain's mind that not only would the Welsh baronet's daughter, with all her claim to the regality of Howel Dha, have been content with the alliance he had sought; but that the model Calverleys of the picture-gallery, including the ambitious guardsman, his cousin Tom, would have been delighted with a choice so unmistakably patrician.

He spoke of course with becoming rapture on his good fortune in being able so perfectly to follow the suggestive lessons that had been impressed

upon him by his successful kindred. He dwelt upon his mother's proud gratification, the wealthy bishop's very reverend satisfaction, the sagacious lord-chancellor's dignified approbation, the colonial governor's majestic content, and the secretary of state's solemn approval.

Again she smiled very sweetly, and seemed supremely happy with her prospect.

Arthur could not help feeling some anxiety as to the reception his pretensions were likely to meet from Geraldine's family; but she presently set his mind at rest on that point.

"You have always been a first favourite with dear grandmamma," she replied archly. "Ever since she first beheld you in that queer old court-suit, your name has been connected with all her pleasantest recollections. As for Fitz, he regards you like a brother; my uncle Scudamore never tires of singing your praises; while dear Fanny, duchess though she is, will, I am quite certain, afford me her warmest congratulations as soon as I let her know that my girlish hopes, in which she

joined with such thorough sisterly affection, are about to be realised."

Every thing seemed *couleur de rose*,—no lover, he felt convinced, could have looked upon a brighter future. The pleasure both enjoyed in these happy explanations made them linger over them till, in the stillness that prevailed, they heard Fitzmaurice rise from his couch, where he had been left, and walk towards the open window.

Late as it was, Arthur determined on acquainting his friend with his engagement to his sister; so he let her glide by him to her own chamber, without answering her brother's exclamation of surprise at the lateness of the hour; and after inducing him to light a cigar, and come out into the pleasant night air, as they strolled together along the gravelled path, he told him what had occurred.

"Settled that at last, have you?" he replied in the highest spirits and good-humour. "It's what I've been expecting a long' time,—a deuced long time, I may say,—till I fancied you were seeking



more solid advantages in a partner for life than Geraldine possesses. I was mistaken; and precious glad I was, I can tell you, to find that out."

Arthur did not quite understand the allusion. His friend went on, however, without affording him an opportunity for explanation.

"But the Fitzmaurices are not going to permit the very best and brightest of them all to pass away from them empty-handed. The estate, to be sure, is plaguily encumbered,—too common a case with family property in Ireland,—but I will lose no time in poking up Dillon to try and get something handsome out of it."

Arthur earnestly dissuaded the Viscount from attempting any thing of the kind, assuring him with all a lover's fervour, that his sister's personal gifts formed a fortune far beyond the deserts of a younger son.

"Oh, of course!" answered his young comrade, laughing. "She's an El Dorado. We are not likely to differ in that estimation, old fellow, I

assure you ; but, between you and I and the post, now, will personal gifts, even so brilliant as those of Geraldine, maintain the sort of establishment of which she ought to be the mistress ? Just tell me that."

Arthur declared his ability to surround his wife with every comfort ; and though acknowledging his friend's right to look for a higher position for her, expressed his conviction of being able to insure her happiness.

"That's not the question," was his answer. "I represent an Irish house ; and though my education has made me so entirely English, that I hardly seem to have a feeling beyond this island, I know what the head of the family ought to do when a daughter of the Fitzmaurices becomes a bride. Dillon will be able to manage the matter for me pleasantly enough, I have not the least doubt ; and as I am not at all likely to follow your example, I can for the future limit my expenditure to a bachelor's modest allowance. So make your mind easy."

Though the disinterested lover determined to prevent, if possible, this generous idea being realised, he thought it better to offer no further opposition.

"I hope the Countess will be satisfied?" said he interrogatively.

The Cornet laughed.

"Poor dear old granny!" he exclaimed; "I am sure nothing on earth would give her half as much gratification. She has been constantly suggesting her wishes to me about Geraldine in the customary flood of quaint recollections of her own girlhood; in which you and my granduncle so frequently change places, I fall into the belief that it must have been *you* who flourished at court in the last century as a model lord-chamberlain, and that 'my dear lord' remains in the flesh amongst us, in the most capital preservation possible, considering that he was contemporary with those venerable royal personages George III. and Queen Charlotte."

He then, in the same pleasant manner, re-

ferred to some of the most agreeable incidents that occurred during Arthur's intimacy with his family, dwelling particularly on those happy scenes in which his beautiful cousin formed one of the group. The increasing tenderness in the tones of his voice whenever he mentioned her name would have betrayed his secret, had it been unsuspected.

"By the way," he said suddenly, "I heard to-day that the Duke had been taken so seriously ill that he has been obliged to retire from the Cabinet. I will go to the Club to-morrow and ascertain what reliance may be placed on the report."

"Oh, there is always some gossip afloat about public men," replied Arthur. "I observed no change in his appearance when I paid my respects at Porchester House the day after his return to town."

"The air is getting cool," was added presently; "let us go in."

Lord Fitzmaurice flung away the end of his cigar, and returned to the sitting-room through the

open window, talking with all his old gaiety of heart.

“In the morning,” he said, as they took their bed-candlesticks, “I will arrange an interview for you with granny. She will be delighted, I know; that is, as far as any thing can delight the dear old soul; but I must warn you of a serious change in her appearance. Good-night. I shall see you at breakfast.”

They shook hands, and retired to their bedrooms.

After a pleasant and refreshing sleep, Arthur woke at rather a late hour in the morning. He looked out at his window, and found the sun high in the heavens, the sky serene, and the river brilliant. Team after team could be seen on the towing-path, dragging heavy barges; and here and there a punt, anchored in mid-stream, with one or more patient anglers pursuing their favourite recreation. It was a little too early for pleasure-boats; but not too early for the swans, for a group of them floated by the rushy margin, the parent-

birds looking dazzlingly white in contrast with their dusky brood. It was an exquisite scene, and long survived among the lover's memories of that happy home.

He dressed, and descended to the breakfast-room, where he found Geraldine arranging some fresh-cut flowers in the vases. Their mutual salutations had scarcely been interchanged when her brother entered; so there was no opportunity for much tender demonstration on either side.

Yet Arthur was perfectly satisfied. It was impossible to look at her without being convinced that she was very happy. Indeed, in the elegant morning summer-robe she wore—a delicate French muslin—she seemed to float with a grace more impressive than that she had gained from her most elaborate toilette.

He could not but acknowledge, as he continued to gaze on her admiringly, the air of high birth that breathed over her every movement. Again and again he congratulated himself on his good fortune. There could be no doubt that he had

secured a prize that would satisfy the most exacting of his ambitious relatives.

Lord Fitzmaurice played the host at this agreeable meal in the most charming manner imaginable. He seemed to throw aside his languor; his wan face was rendered cheerful with a beaming smile, and the tremulous tones of the invalid changed to the laughing voice of the careless thoughtless cornet of hussars. If it had not been for that empty sleeve, Arthur could have fancied that the comrade of his early career had been restored to him with his youthful joyousness of spirit quite unimpaired.

The group seemed far too happy to do justice to the excellent repast the housekeeper had set before them; nevertheless there was occasionally much pretence of enjoyment, and apparently an earnest appreciation of the Chiswick hot rolls and butter, the grilled chicken, and rasher of ham, and the capital coffee and chocolate of which they sparingly partook. Arthur was not sorry when Fitzmaurice flung aside his napkin, and with

sly humour expressed a hope that his presence might be dispensed with for a few minutes.

"If you should be dull in my absence, old fellow," he added, glancing towards his friend with affected gravity, "there is 'The Whole Duty of Man' in the bookcase. One ought to be fully prepared, you know. I strongly recommend you to profit by a study of that very appropriate work."

He quitted the room with his gay-hearted laugh, and the lovers were left alone. I need scarcely say that Arthur did not follow the friendly suggestion. The precious volume was left undisturbed, and in the blissful half-hour that followed the minutes flew by with angel-wings. Life had opened before them a landscape of golden blossoms steeped in sunshine, a world of enchantment rosy and brilliant, such as only could be created by that potent magician—love.

And they surrendered themselves not only to a sense of its reality, but to a conviction of its endurance. Their Garden of Eden was not only a portion of the fair earth created for use, but



its flowers were immortal, and its sunbeams those of a perpetual day.

At last they were summoned upstairs. The venerable old lady of the house had grown too feeble to descend to the drawing-room, and a cheerful sitting-room had been fitted up for her that opened from her bedchamber and looked out upon the river. There they proceeded together: Geraldine's delicate features a little flushed with affectionate excitement; Arthur, however, under the influence of a foreboding that the sparkling chalice he had been suffered to raise to his lips was about to be dashed to his feet. The impression was a sudden one, and he knew not how or why it came—probably a reaction from the intense pleasure in which he had been indulging. All he knew was, that he entered the apartment with none of the buoyant spirit of the lover he had been so freely displaying a very brief interval before.

The dowager lay back in her large chair. The quaint tall head-dress had totally disappeared; a

close lace-cap, from which a little silvery hair emerged, had been substituted for it; and in place of the stomachered and hooped robe was a loose morning-wrapper of white jaconet.

Her form seemed to have grown thinner, her face more pale and wrinkled. One shaking hand held a silver ear-trumpet; the other grasped that of her young kinsman, who was leaning tenderly over her chair. She held it out to Arthur as he approached, apparently having been so prompted.

He could not help acknowledging that a serious change had indeed taken place in the appearance of his dear old friend; but the extent of that change he had yet to learn.

A feeble pressure having been accorded, she put out her hand to receive that of her granddaughter, and retained it in her grasp.

"Fitz says you are going to be married, my dear child," she said in a low broken voice.

"Yes, dear grandmamma," was the reply.

"Ah!" There was a deep sigh and a mournful shake of the head.

“ I hope you will bear in mind your religious duties, my dear. Flesh is grass, as poor dear Mr. Whitefield used to say. I often went to him at the Tabernacle. And then there was dear Mr. Wesley, too, a very powerful preacher. I heard that sermon of his on—on—I can’t remember the text, though I know Lady Huntingdon, who went with me, took it down. And then there was Dr. Watts, who wrote such pretty hymns, you know—I was mightily taken with them, and learnt a good many. I particularly remember one about the busy bee—”

She stopped, as if to recal the familiar lines ; but as they were not forthcoming, her nephew repeated them through the silver trumpet.

“ Of course. What a memory you have, my dear ! And I went to hear the sermon at the chapel of the Lock Hospital with Lady Pennington, who wrote a book about—well, I can’t call to mind what it was. And Mr. Chapone wrote a book, and so did Hannah More ; but I cannot remember them either. Of course they were very

pious and good—I daresay something like Bishop Blair, or Bishop Porteus. And then there was *The Dairyman's Daughter* and Dr. Dodd's *Prison-Thoughts*. It was very good of him to write for the poor prisoners, wasn't it, my dear?"

Here was a serious change, indeed—one her visitor had not at all contemplated—probably brought about by a sense of approaching dissolution. She went on :

"But I always went regularly to the Chapel Royal; the chaplains were sure to give us such excellent discourses; so orthodox, you know; almost as good as the bishops and archbishops. Tillotson was *my* favourite; and his grace was held in general esteem by the royal household; the dear good King—"

The speaker stopped short, and looked embarrassed.

"She told me all that was vanity," she muttered, apparently to herself, "and that I ought to devote my entire attention to spiritual subjects. I can't see what harm there can be in thinking of

the dear good King, and the sweet Queen, and the darling Princesses, and in mentioning my dear lord now and then ; but they said it was nothing but worldly-mindedness, and that I must fix my thoughts exclusively on high."

Arthur looked inquiringly at Lord Fitzmaurice ; but he was gazing reverently on the venerable face before him.

"Geraldine is anxious for your approval of her choice, dear grandmamma," the Cornet cried through the ear-trumpet.

"Poor dear!" was her exclamation in reply. "Of course I do. Fanny married a duke, and Geraldine is worthy of a prince, I am sure. I hope that she will be very happy—as happy as I was with my dear—but I mustn't talk about him. Who is it, Fitz, you said she was going to marry?"

Her nephew had once more recourse to the trumpet, and strove hard to stir up his relative's dormant recollection a long time without the slightest success. Geraldine assisted with re-

petitions of former flattering opinions, but with as little effect. She looked disappointed and distressed.

“I hope that he will be very kind to you, child,” the dowager said presently. “Every body was kind to me when I married, especially the sweet—but I’m not to talk of her majesty either. I never saw any one I thought good enough for you except one, and he was the very image of my dear —. It’s very hard I mustn’t mention his name.”

This bitter complaint was scarcely expressed when both her young relatives simultaneously endeavoured to make her understand that her visitor was the individual so flatteringly remembered.

The mingled voices confused her. She turned her head from one to the other; but the expression of her features assured Arthur that she did not comprehend what was said. In this dilemma he thought that the imperfect sense might still befriend him; so, making a sign to his zealous advocates to be silent, he addressed her through

the acoustic tube. The intelligence immediately visible in her face was unquestionable evidence that she recognised his voice.

"Ah, you looked so like my dear lord," she answered. "Well, I *can't* help referring to him, and I don't believe it's a sin; for with the very dress, you had my lord-chamberlain's very look and manner.

"So you want to have Geraldine for a wife? Very well; and you shall have an old woman's blessing into the bargain."

Fitzmaurice looked as much gratified as his sister; as for the gallant Captain, he felt quite touched by the tender manner in which the dowager presently placed Geraldine's hand in his own.

"It's exactly what I wished from the beginning," she said. "Nothing could have pleased me more; and though they insist that at my age I ought to direct all my thoughts and feelings towards Heaven, I suppose I must be content to remain a sinful old woman, for I can't help being happy at the happiness of those around me; and

the sweet Queen and the dear good King (I must and I will think of them!) were always delighted when the darling Princesses got married; and my dear lord (they sha'n't stop me speaking of him!) was so fond of seeing the maids-of-honour happy, that nothing pleased him so much as being invited to their marriages."

Arthur could not understand the nature of the coercion his dear old friend was struggling against; but as no one attempted to enlighten him, he set it down as a delusion. The fact is, the brother and sister were absorbed by their high spirits while assisting him in keeping the somewhat erratic thoughts of their kinswoman in the desired channel. With their help they ran on—with occasional breaks, it is true—till she became exhausted by her own vivacity. Then her visitor took his leave.

Tender embraces and cordial congratulations attended his departure.

The grave butler, the ancient housekeeper, and the little parlour-maid, having been apprised



of the state of affairs, could not be restrained from demonstrating their good-will.

A little later Arthur drove away from the door, as perfectly content as a Calverley could be with his lot on earth.

## CHAPTER XII.

### A STARTLING DISCOVERY.

NOTHING could exceed Arthur's exhilaration of spirits as he drove to his lodgings in the Albany : but high as they were, they became still more elevated when, on opening the letters awaiting him, he found one with an official seal announcing his appointment to a continental embassy. This was far in advance of his most sanguine expectations. He appreciated it the more when he ascertained that it was the last official act of the Duke of Porchester.

He had surrendered himself to the contemplation of his brilliant prospects, when he was informed that a stranger wished to see him. Under

the impression that his visitor was a messenger from the Foreign Office, he directed the person to be shown in.

Presently there entered the room a middle-aged man, of a somewhat rustic appearance, his broad-brimmed hat and long-skirted overcoat, foxy complexion, and straggling gray hair by no means realising the idea of a Government subordinate. The expression of his face too was painfully embarrassed—not at all like that of a bearer of good tidings.

“Maybe ye don’t remember me, yer honour?”

Arthur stared. There was something familiar in the features as well as in the tones of the voice, but he could not for the moment recal to his mind where he had seen and heard them. The man was an Irishman, that was evident enough; but a limited acquaintance with his countrymen did not assist the Captain’s recollection. Moreover he looked a farmer, apparently just arrived in England.

“Me name is Dillon, sir,” he said at last,

scratching the back of his head. "Maybe ye've heard the young lord speak of me; but I was known to yer honour a good many years back—the blessed day ye saved the sweet young lady from a watery grave—glory be to God!"

Arthur recollected the man in a moment as Lord Fitzmaurice's agent. He therefore endeavoured by a friendly reception to set him at his ease; for his embarrassment seemed to increase rather than diminish.

Mr. Dillon sat on the edge of a chair at his host's invitation, brushing his hat with his sleeve, with a downcast look; indeed the signs of mental distress became so conspicuous, Arthur felt assured the poor man must have recently met with some great misfortune.

"I hope nothing has happened, Mr. Dillon," he said kindly.

"Faith, then, it is, sir," he replied, his uneasiness growing more apparent.

"I'm very sorry. Some family bereavement, I am afraid."

"It's true for you, sir. Bereavement it is entirely—so grievous, so unbearable, it's meself can't find words to spake it to yer honour."

Arthur tried to soothe him. The poor fellow must have lost some one near and dear to him, he thought—son, daughter, or wife; and he was not too happy to be beyond the reach of sympathy with an honest man's distress.

"We are all liable to such visitations," he observed, having recourse to the usual form of consolation. "You are not specially singled out for them, Mr. Dillon. Death is the common lot, my good friend."

"Oh, it's worse than that! it's worse than that!" cried the man.

Arthur looked at him more intently. He was not in mourning; it could not, therefore, have been the loss of a member of his family which had caused that disturbed state of mind. The evil must have taken another shape.

"If it's any pecuniary loss, Dillon, pray don't let that distress you. I daresay Lord Fitz-

maurice and myself will be able to make every thing straight."

"More power to ye're honour; but it isn't that at all, at all." Then he added with a broken voice, covering his face with his hands, "It's worse than beggary—it's disgrace."

Captain Calverley paused. The man had long been employed as agent for the Maurice-Court Estate, and the most perfect confidence had been reposed in him. The admission just made suggested misappropriation.

"I am grieved to hear this," he observed in a graver tone. "I have always heard Lord Fitzmaurice speak highly of you. I am sure that it will distress him very much to know that you have done wrong in any way."

"The devil a-bit of harm have I done to man, woman, or child, saving your honour's presence. It isn't meself I'm spaking of."

"Who, then?"

"Faith, then, it's them as I'd die to sarve any day; it's them as I've looked up to as the

salt of the earth; it's them as I've toiled for and watched over since the father of them came to his misfortunate end in that devil's own unlucky steeple-chase."

A cold chill seemed to break over Arthur's limbs. The apprehension of a terrible misfortune happening to the two beings he loved most in the world—coming, too, so unexpectedly—appalled him: he started to his feet.

"Disgrace to them!" he cried. "Disgrace to Lord Fitzmaurice! disgrace to Geraldine! Why, man, you must be dreaming!"

"Mighty glad I'd be to find it only a drame," he replied sorrowfully; "and a joyful waking I'd have at the end of it; but the terribleness of it is, there's no disputing its reality."

"What on earth do you mean?" asked the young man in an almost frantic state of alarm.

"If your honour will believe me, I'd rather cut out my tongue than say it; but if I don't tell ye, ye'll be sure to know it soon enough; and as ye're such a friend of the family, I wanted

ye to break it to them, poor things, if they haven't had notice of it from them as won't tell it over-kindly, I'll go bail."

"Tell me the worst, Dillon; and tell me at once, or I shall go mad!" he cried passionately.

"Faith, then, *it's illegitimate they are*: bad cess to me for being obliged to say it!"

Arthur dropped back in the chair as if his heart had been struck by a bullet. Of all the evils that could by any possibility have afflicted his friends, this was the very last to be anticipated, and the very worst that could have visited them. In a moment he felt the full effect of its crushing influence on their refined and highly-sensitive natures, and groaned in the bitterness of his anguish. Presently the monstrousness of the idea suggested its improbability. It could not be true; there must be some mistake.

In reply to his eager and indignant questions, he succeeded in obtaining from his visitor the following narrative:

On a small freehold farm, in the neighbour-



hood of the Maurice-Court Estate, had resided a family much respected in that part of Ireland, though they rarely associated with the gentry. They were known to have held the same property for many centuries, and were reputed to have descended from one of the ancient lords of the soil, the original proprietor of the entire barony.

Be this as it may, at the time to which the story refers they consisted only of a widow and her daughter, the former in her way of life differing but little from the farmers' wives of the best class; the latter, however, resembling none of the farmers' daughters in the least, for she was possessed of extraordinary beauty; and having been carefully educated at a convent, her accomplishments and personal attractions seemed to have raised her so much above her position, that all the young fellows who were ambitious of becoming her admirers felt themselves constrained to worship at a respectful distance.

Her fame, however, as the beauty of the county, travelled far and wide; and though she

was remarkably reserved and seldom went from home alone, she could not shut herself out entirely from the curiosity of strangers. The result was one of those acts of violence in the last century familiar to Irish lovers—an abduction. She was forcibly carried off; and with such secrecy, that after a most rigid search not a trace of her could be discovered. •

At last, when the mother's anxieties had become almost intolerable, she received a letter from her daughter, bearing a foreign post-mark, announcing her marriage. The most startling part of the news it contained was that she had been carried off by the heir of Maurice Court, notoriously one of the most reckless libertines in all Ireland, assisted by associates as wild as himself: nevertheless, it assured her that she had been honourably cared for, and married by a priest as soon as she had attained a place of safety.

She had then been hurriedly embarked in a sailing-vessel, and taken to Brussels, where her husband required her to remain in concealment,

as he was most anxious to prevent the affair coming to the knowledge of his father, who was in a bad state of health. As news had just arrived of the old lord's death, she had availed herself of a permission she had received to communicate with her friends.

Lord and Lady Fitzmaurice remained abroad till after the birth of their first child, when they went to reside in England, where the former continued his career of extravagance till it had been suddenly stopped by the catastrophe described at the commencement of this narrative, the shock of which had so fearful an effect on his young wife, that she died within a month.

Dillon, who was a kinsman of hers, had been much noticed by Lord Fitzmaurice, and having imbibed the same taste for the turf, had been permitted to ride his horses at different races. At his patron's premature death the estate was found to be so exhausted as to leave scarcely a subsistence for the children; but they were brought up by English relatives.

Dillon returned to Ireland, abandoned the pursuits to which he had been so ardently attached, and devoted himself to watching over the interests of the orphans. He got himself appointed agent to the Maurice-Court Estate, which, by judicious management, he had now succeeded in clearing of its principal incumbrances. --

It appeared that within the last year or two he had let a small farm to a man who had come from a distant part of the country. He proved a troublesome tenant, and the conscientious agent, finding that the land was neglected, served him with notice of ejectment. Shortly afterwards he ascertained that the next heir, a cousin of the late lord, a notorious gambler who had hitherto lived almost entirely abroad, had come into the neighbourhood, and had been visiting the tenantry in company with a Dublin lawyer; after which the agent received a communication announcing the commencement of legal proceedings to dispute the present Viscount's title to his estates, on account of the illegality of his father's marriage.

Dillon at once had sought the best legal advice, in the conviction that he could dispose of the matter without causing the family annoyance; but after a searching examination it came to light that when the bride had been brought to the priest's house, the reverend gentleman was absent, and the impatience of the bridegroom to take advantage of a favourable wind, and get his prize beyond the reach of pursuit, joined probably to the expectation of a liberal reward, had induced the priest's brother to put on the sacred vestments and make a pretence of a marriage-ceremony. He was a young man of bad character, was never in holy orders, and proved to be the ejected tenant.

Arthur heard out this story in a most painful state of alarm and anxiety; he was sufficiently aware of the character borne by the late lord in his youth, to know that the chief incident was far from improbable; but the consequences that threatened his friends were too terrible to contemplate. He knew that his gallant, generous, high-spirited comrade, in his maimed state and

critical health, was in no condition to receive a shock of this kind, and determined that the intelligence should be kept from him at all hazards.

Then came the contemplation of the refined and delicate Geraldine, awakened to the consciousness that she had been filling a position to which she had not the shadow of a claim, and must sink to one from which her sensitive nature would recoil with aversion and abhorrence. The idea filled him with anguish, as he felt convinced that both would be unable to hold up against a humiliation for which they would be equally unprepared.

His first thought was for the faithful agent. The poor fellow was utterly cast down, besides being exhausted by fatigue and want of nourishment. Refreshment was provided for him at once, of which whilst he was partaking, his host took serious counsel of himself as to what ought to be his own conduct in such a painful crisis.

All the influential members of his family rose up before him in indignant protest against his entertaining the idea of marriage with a girl now

totally without fortune or name. He remembered how careful the more ambitious had been to connect themselves well, and what a horror even the humblest had entertained of the introduction of the bar-sinister into their imposing quarterings.

He was well aware that vulgar blood had been more than once introduced into the genealogical current; but it was invariably a Pactolus that left a rich deposit.

In this instance there was unmistakable poverty as well as disgrace, and the rising man, with his feet firmly planted on the first spokes of the ladder of ambition, could scarcely be insensible to the world's opinion of the false step he would make, were he to enter into an obvious *mésalliance*.

On the other hand there were the unworldly impressions of an honourable love. He could not but remember how short a time it was since the possession of Geraldine had been regarded as the most covetable of human distinctions, and that her beauty had filled and elevated his nature like a divine inspiration.

Then came the entrancing recollection of the reality of her attachment, and a recurrence of that delicious sense which thrilled his heart and brain when she murmured her confession, trembling in his arms in the tender moonlight. Her pure kisses were scarcely dry upon his lips; he could almost feel the pressure of her clinging embrace upon his breast.

A few hours only had gone by since they were one and indivisible, and the souls that had mingled and passed into each other were now required to disunite and remain for ever asunder. Yet all that was angelic in the woman remained as divine as it had come from heaven. The perfection he had worshipped was still without a flaw. The blot on her escutcheon affected neither her heart, her mind, nor her soul.

The sway of natural feeling presently began to make itself felt. Her lover could not bear the idea of the utter helplessness and degradation to which she must inevitably be reduced when the secret of her birth became the theme of gossip



in the circle that had hitherto known her as its brightest ornament. Her place would know her no more; her associates would regard her as an imposter; and her dearest friends turn their backs upon her as one who had forfeited all claim to their acquaintance.

A chivalrous sympathy caused his nature to revolt against this injustice, while it made him sensible of the fact that he alone had the power to remedy it. As his wife, no one would venture to remind her of the misfortune of her birth—no one would dare to treat her with disrespect for her heraldic deficiencies; as his wife, she could pass unchallenged into any society that he thought good enough to receive her.

His new office would, he was certain, afford him an income sufficient for the comfort of both brother and sister; and he considered it a bounden duty, if only by way of return for the happiness he had enjoyed since he had been admitted to the privileges of their pleasant home, to share his with them.

At last he settled it all very pleasantly in his own mind, with as little reference to the opinion of the world as to the prejudices of his well-married kindred.

“Dillon,” said he, suddenly addressing the agent, as the latter was languidly breaking a long fast—grave and thoughtful, and uneasy at the long silence of his companion, as he walked up and down the room with a perturbed and distressed look—“Dillon, I think I can rely on your interest in these dear orphans.” .

“It’s meself that would go barefoot through the world to serve them,” replied the man eagerly. “Out of regard to the father, who was as good as a brother to me. By the same token I was the nearest of kin of the poor deceived young lady who thought herself his wife, and am obligated too on that account to stand by them in their great misfortune—sorry I am for that same.”

“Well, then, listen to me. I do not think it would be prudent just at present to mention the circumstance to Fitzmaurice, his health being

delicate; nor to the dowager, who is very old, and getting feeble in her intellect."

"It's thrue for you, sir."

"You had better go to Chiswick, and as privately as possible communicate the facts of this lamentable case to Geraldine. Break them to her gently; and when you have done this, you shall give her a letter from me, which I trust will enable her to bear up against this heavy affliction."

"May the heavens be your bed!" cried Dillon fervently. "And ye'll not then neglect the darling colleen because of this misfortune that's happened to her!"

The truly gallant gentleman not only assured him that he entertained no such intention, but was so determined to befriend both brother and sister, that he should lose no time in consulting the most eminent lawyers with a view to their defence—if any chance existed of proving the marriage of their mother.

Dillon, on hearing this, became a changed

man. The appearance of hopeless despondency was flung aside; he grew at once wild with hope and high spirits. Expressions of earnest gratitude mingled with equally fervent congratulations at his good luck in having met with so true a friend to his unfortunate relations. He promised to be guided entirely by his advice, and implicitly to follow out his instructions.

He was left to finish his meal, to which he applied himself with an energy very different to the spiritless manner in which it had been commenced, while the proposed letter was being written.

Arthur sat down to his task with a sense of responsibility he had never experienced before. His fear was that in the excitement of his feelings he should not be able to render his communication sufficiently affectionate. Passing lightly over the unhappy circumstance that had come to his knowledge, which he affected to treat as a matter that might be left to legal management with perfect confidence, he kindly insisted on the right Geral-

dine's affection had given him to befriend her in any emergency, informed her of his excellent appointment, and implored her to hasten their marriage, so that nothing could have power henceforth to affect their happiness.

He added that to secure the care and companionship of her brother, he should get him placed in an honourable position. So considerate was he that even the dear grandmother was not forgotten; for he dwelt on the beneficial effects of a change of residence for her in the gay and pleasant city to which he was about to be transferred. Finally he begged a few lines to call him to her dear presence and express her sanction of his plans.

With these credentials Dillon was at last permitted to go on his errand; but not till he had been made to listen to long and anxious suggestions as to how he was to communicate his startling news; and carefully instructed as to the arguments he was to use to prevent its making too painful an impression on the mind of his

young kinswoman; more especially was the necessity impressed upon him of urging every inducement for a speedy marriage and immediate acquiescence in the arrangements proposed in the letter intrusted to his care.

Left to himself, Arthur Calverley looked his position fairly in the face. He was satisfied that he had acted rightly. Though fully aware of the censure that awaited him in certain directions, he believed that his conduct would not pass without cordial approval from one or two persons whose good opinion he far more highly valued. Lord Madras was welcome to express whatever adverse judgment he pleased; and all the male and female Calverleys might indulge in a chorus of indignation and pity if they chose, at such a glaring departure from the family policy; but he felt assured of the commendation of honest Jack Sendamore and his beautiful daughter.

The Squire would, he was certain, never have sanctioned the desertion of Geraldine under such circumstances; he was equally confident that as

soon as he heard of them he would do his best to render the change they would produce in the social position of herself and her brother, scarcely appreciable. As for the Duchess, he thought he knew her true womanly nature too well to suspect her for a moment capable of overlooking her play-fellow's claims upon her sympathy.

Secure as he considered himself of such approval and support, he gave himself no farther concern as to what the wordly-minded of his set might say or do. Remembering, however, that he must not delay in attending to the important official document that had afforded him so much gratification, he hurried off to Downing Street to express his acknowledgments and report himself ready to undertake the mission.

Here he found a letter directing him to proceed with all possible expedition to join the writer at one of his country mansions more than a hundred miles from town, to receive important instructions.

He went, and was detained day after day,

conferring upon questions of great political interest it was essential that he should thoroughly understand before he entered upon his post. The unexpected retirement of the Duke of Porchester had thrown the business of the department into great confusion ; indeed had exceedingly embarrassed his grace's colleagues ; and his successor could only find time to give an hour occasionally to the newly-appointed diplomatist.

At the end of a week Arthur returned to his chambers, having arranged every thing to his satisfaction. He was to leave England in a fortnight. He came back buoyant with hope. He had already written to a Chancery lawyer of the highest eminence, instructing him to resist the claims of the pretender to the Fitzmaurice peerage as long as a chance of success remained ; therefore nothing now was left for him to do but to see Geraldine, and follow out the plan he had submitted for her approval.

A letter awaited him, the perusal of which threw a gloomy cloud over the hopes that had



made his prospect so brilliant with happiness. It ran as follows :

*“ Rose Lawn.*

“ DEAREST ARTHUR,—It is impossible for me to express the sense of grateful devotion with which I read your very, very kind—your noble, generous letter, after hearing the distressing intelligence of which Mr. Dillon was the bearer. Believe me, I shall ever regard it with the same exquisite feelings it created when first perused, and I will never part with it—never, never. It shall remain with me as the most precious evidence of an honourable position, that the respect for what is right and true, in which I have been so carefully educated, compels me to relinquish.

“ It is no easy matter to surrender every thing that is most covetable, most enjoyable in life ; still more difficult is it to estrange oneself from kind friends and pleasant associates, with whom one's existence has grown up and flourished ; but to waken from the brightest happiest dream of life into impenetrable darkness and dread—to find the golden

romance of girlhood end in a torn and blotted page of commonplace misery, is indeed hard, very hard to bear.

“ Yet the recollection that I was found worthy of your love strengthens my endurance; and the knowledge that I have enjoyed a happiness that ought never to have been mine must go far towards rendering me reconciled to my deprivation. It can be no additional disgrace to acknowledge that from childhood I loved you with every lovable feeling of my nature; and for the intense felicity which year after year grew with that affection, please to accept the blessings and prayers of the darkened remnant of my life.

“ Yours ever,

“ GERALDINE.”

Hastily placing the letter in his pocket-book, in a tumult of passionate regret to which no language could do justice, Arthur hurried to Chiswick, but only to find the cottage untenanted. All the inquiries he immediately instituted in the neigh-

bourhood were fruitless. Nothing could be learnt beyond the fact that the family had left the house, evidently without any intention of returning to it, as it had been stripped of its furniture, and a board put up announcing that it was to be let.

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